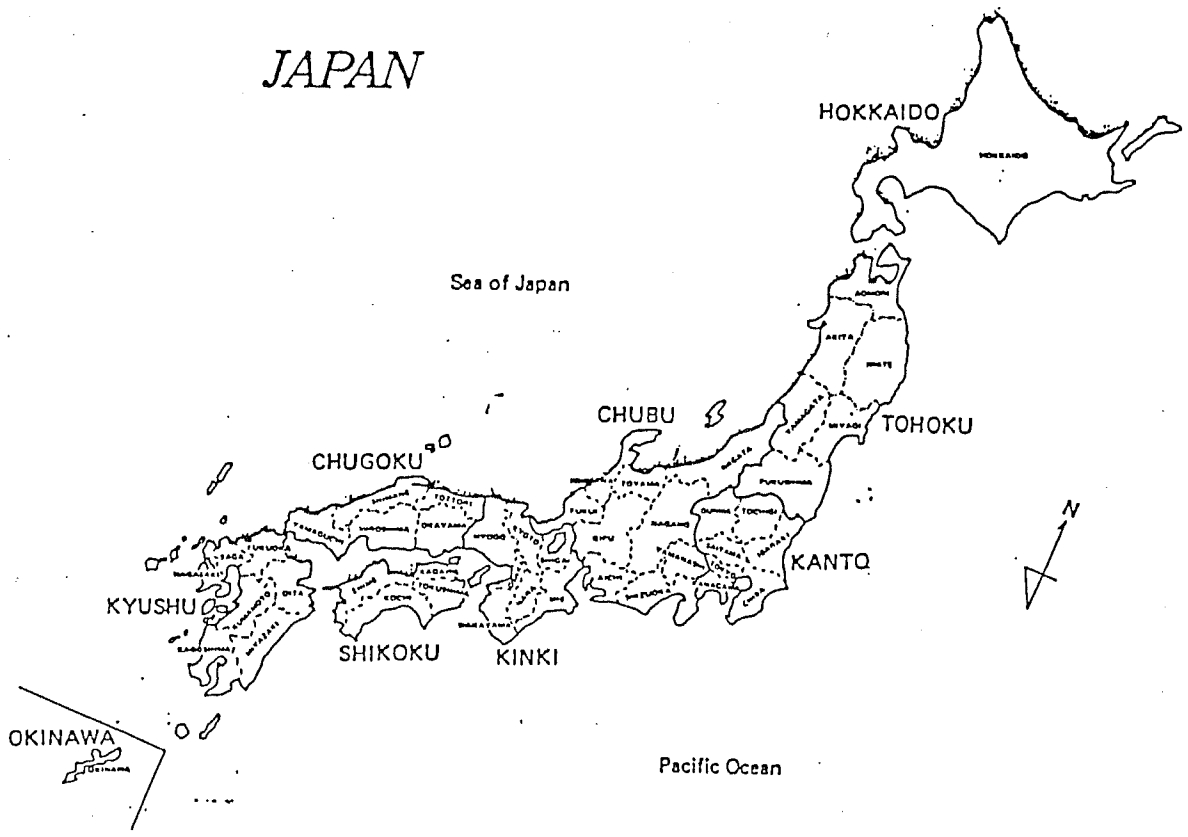
The History of Our WELS Mission in Japan

with
Historical and
Cultural Background



Wm. F. Bernhardt

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INTRODUCTION

"Japan is the Mount Everest of missionary work." Bernard Wysocki Jr., a staff reporter for THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, made this observation in his article describing Japan as "Barren Ground"[1] when it comes to doing Christian mission work in that country. Few missionaries would disagree that Japan is a most difficult country in which to share the gospel of Christ Jesus. Even though very aggressive Christian mission work began there in the mid-sixteenth century A.D., today less than one per cent (1%) of the Japanese population lays claim to any part of the visible Christian church.

Two main factors join in the resistence to the Christian missionary's labors for his Lord. First, there is the deeply entrenched traditions of the Japanese people. For centuries - dating back to the "legalizing" of Christianity in 313 A.D. - the Japanese cultural traditions have held all that is not Japanese in suspicion if not with contempt. Then, a related condition barricades the Japanese heart against Christianity; it is their religions. Primarily the Japanese cling to the false beliefs of Shintoism and Buddhism, although a smaller percentage lay claim to Confucianism as well. Shintoism is the oldest of the Japanese religions, but Buddhism is the more prevalent. The former embraces an ancestral worship and the latter espouses a strict asceticism; both are permeated with superstition and work-righteous concepts.

Christian mission work has persisted in spite of all this. Even though for over two hundred years (from 1614 to 1854 A.D.) the doors were closed to Christians - and all other outsiders, for that matter, the message of the Savior is being preached in Japan today. And, it is bearing fruit, precious fruit. Especially since World War II the Christian missionaries have enjoyed the "open door" policy of the Japanese government. Still, the missionary is faced with the "closed-heart" attitude of the majority of the Japanese people.

Our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is in Japan - and the Lord has blessed our mission work there! It is slow work, if one compares the growth statistics of Japan with other world fields of our WELS: 248 baptized souls in Japan compared with 10,607 baptized souls in Malawi, Africa. Still, when our Japan mission field celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its present mission effort in Japan, it did so as an organized and incorporated daughter church body of the WELS, the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church in Japan. In spite of the barriers that face our mission workers there, the ministry in Japan is also joyful and fulfilling.

It is the hope of this writer that the following information will give a capsulized picture of the nature of our Japan mission field and offer a keener insight of the situation in which our missionaries, pastors and other fellow Christians labor for the Lord. It will be necessary to develop a picture of Japan as a nation in order to better understand our mission work in that country. At the same time it can only prompt an enlarged sense of thankfulness for the Lord's special blessings and guidance of his people in Japan.

A more complete description of our work in Japan will soon be available when The History of the Wisconsin Synod in Japan, 1957-1982 is put into print for distribution. It still must be edited and a format must be selected. This history is a result of the combined efforts of several of our Seminary students in Mequon - under the direction of Professor Fredrich and in consultation with members of our Executive Committee for Japan Missions.

It is the hope of this writer that what follows will be of value particularly for the pastors and teachers of our Synod when they wish to give a brief presentation on our mission work in Japan.

William F. Bernhardt

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1. "The Wall Street Journal", Vol. 67, no. 187, pages 1 and 16, Wednesday, July 9, 1986.

THE NATION OF JAPAN

The Land Japan is made up of four main rocky islands. Going from north to south the names of these islands are: Hokkaido, Honshu (the largest), Shikoku and Kyushu. There are hundreds of other smaller islands that complete the land mass of this country which compares in size to the state of Montana, i.e. 146,000 square miles. It is a beautiful land with a climate that varies from north to south, much like the climate varies from north to south in the USA. Yet, the land is not very fertile; much of the soil is formed from acidic lava and requires humus producing fertilizers that are rich in nitrogen. As this writer can attest, typhoons and earthquakes are historical facts of life and a very present reality every day. The entire eastern coast of Japan is poised on the edge of a great Pacific trench, a trench which is also a part of an extensive fault in the earth's crust. Still Japan is a land of beckoning beauty with lush green forests and majestic Alp-like mountains (between Tokyo and Osaka). Its lowland valleys and plains - criss-crossed with rivers and their tributaries and canals - support most of this nation's people.

The People According to accepted belief, the people of Japan originally migrated from mainland Asia and are of Mongoloid stock. There is a relatively small population of Korean, European and Ainu (a hairy Caucasian looking people), but there has been little comixture of these with "true" Japanese for at least one thousand years. The population of Japan now numbers 120 million - about 822 people to the square mile.

The Economy From its earliest history the sea has played an important role in the economy of Japan. The Japanese are long time mariners and fishermen. (Still today as you approach Japan by airplane at night - traveling west - the lights of the Japanese fishing boats bob like fireflies on the dark sea many miles from shore.) In this century, and particularly before and since World War II, the economy of Japan has been based on industries that must import nearly all of their raw materials. (Japan imports 99% of its oil and 85% of its coal.) In pre-war years in Japan great monopolistic companies (Zaibatsu) controlled much of Japan's major business and industry. During the occupation after World War II the Zaibatsu were ordered to dissolve, and free enterprise was encouraged. It looked fine in print, but in reality the great companies still exist and still are leaders in Japan's business world. Newcomers are successful, though. Who has not heard of Honda? Sochiro Honda was a mechanic with a dream who worked slavishly to build what is now an industrial empire. One of the largest fishing industries in Japan also developed within the last forty years with Kenkichi Nakabe at its helm. And, of course, the electronics industry has become legendary - if not infamous - to many Americans.

The Educational System Japan's educational system is one of the most effective in the world. School children in Japan score at least ten points higher on comprehensive skills tests on the average than do their American counterparts. Education is intensely competitive. Beginning very early in life (age three to four) a child begins his instruction. As he progesses through the grades,

he is tested frequently and exhaustively. By the time he (or she) reaches high school age, a person's success - or failure - in life is on the line. Only about ten per cent (10%) of the high school students make it to the coveted government run schools. The rest must attend private schools (at sometimes considerable cost) which are considered inferior in quality of education. (Note: Because of this intense competition, teenage suicide is all too common. Many young people despair because they have "lost face" and disgraced their families by not attaining a position in the upper ten per cent grade level.) The objective is to land a position with a company that in all likelihood will employ you for the rest your life. In this regard the relationship between Japanese companies and their workers differs considerably from that of American companies and their workers. The Japanese company selects its employees by elimination examinations given to high school and college students. Upon graduation, the selected student automatically goes to work for "the company". In effect, he "owes his soul to the company store"; from then on the worker is taken care of - often with valuable fringe benefits - until retirement age. In Japan the value of the best education you can get cannot be underrated. Another example of the pressure put on young people to excel in their studies is the fact that their parents will build them little study houses on a corner of the property, or they will add on an upstairs room for the student. All of this is to encourage complete concentration on studies.

The Culture The first time you visit Japan, you will undoubtedly experience a definite cultural shock. Japan's culture is quite different from that our country's (USA). Aside from its religious beliefs, perhaps the prime influence on its culture is the necessary population density. Over the years the Japanese people have learned to live with the problem of too many people on too little land. This closeness developed something called the "web" philosophy. Until quite recently individuality was not encouraged at all. Group decisions still are the rule rather than the exception.

For the man, his social life is tied in with his business to a great extent. In most cases he does not take his wife to social events; and in most cases, she does not expect - or want - him to do so. It is not unusual to see groups of fellow employees on the typical two-day Japanese vacation in the serene hills of the upland country, while wife and children remain at home. Another common practice for the man is to have dinner with his fellow workers - after a ten to twelve hour day on the job. (One wonders how the father can remain the master of his house - as he's reputed to be.) For the woman, particularly the married woman, her life centers around her home and community. By custom the Japanese man is the master of his house and the oldest son is first in favor. The Japanese woman is obedient to her father when she is a child, then to her husband when she is a married woman, and finally to her eldest son - especially if her husband has died. A custom - which is changing in recent years - is that of requiring a daughter-in-law to live with her husband in his family's home, often under a tyrannical mother-in-law. Many times the younger woman is abused and required to do the most miserable tasks. At this time, however, many young women put forward three conditions for marriage: a car, a house and no mother-in-law to live with. (This condition is commonly expressed in this way: "kuruma tsuki, ietsuki, baba nuki.")

In spite of what has just been said, the Japanese people regard the elderly of both sexes with deep respect and high esteem. The fact is, the Japanese people show tenderness, understanding and deep emotion among family members and friends. The elderly especially are cared for lovingly and respectfully.

The Japanese are both an industrious and artistic people. Their art forms are uniquely beautiful and intricate. From pottery to pearls, from wood carvings to portraits, the artists and craftsmen of Japan encorporate their own special genius. True, some of the cultural heritage of Japan came from the Chinese - a horrible thought for the Japanese! The art forms and literature, though, are quite definitely Japanese. What one could regard as true pristine Japanese culture emerged during the ninth century A.D.

CAPSULE HISTORY (For our purposes, the origins of Japan are not as important as the subsequent history that brought forth the nation itself. Therefore, this brief description will begin with the Nara Period in 710 A.D. For an idea of the earlier developments in its history, please refer to addendum, page 5, entitled, "CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF JAPANESE POLITICS AND CULTURE".)

Time in Japan can be divided into two eras, with variable number of years corresponding to the reigns of the emperors. Until the middle of the Nineteenth Century there often would be two or more eras in the reign of an emperor. Their eras, or reigns, are known by different names. One of the most famous and best known was the Meiji Era. Following the Meiji came the Taisho Era; and after that came the present, or Showa Era of Emperor Hirohito who has reigned since 1926. (The year, 1986, is the 61st year of Showa, and the Japanese still use this method of naming years together with the Western method. To convert from our years to Showa just subtract 25.) Meiji can be translated as "Clear Governing", Taisho as "Great Right", and Showa as "Bright Harmony."

At the beginning of the Eighth Century Nara was established as the first permanent capital of Japan. In 794 the capital was moved to Kyoto. Emperor Meiji established the capital in Edo in 1868; this 400-year-old city was then renamed Tokyo, or Eastern Capital, where it remains to this day.

Earlier, in the Heian Period (794 to 1190 A.D.), when the capital was in Kyoto, court officials concentrated on a life of elegance and ceremonial observances; they paid little attention to political and social developments in other parts of Japan. It was at this time that local clans were building their own armed forces. One clan, the Taira, took over the government rule in 1156. In 1192, the head of the Minamoto family, Yorimoto, established a military government in Kamakura known as the Shogunate. When he died, his wife's family (the Hojos) ruled until it was overthrown in 1338 (Some say it was 1333).

One of the most interesting periods of Japanese history begins with the Kamakura period. The samurai were the knights of that time, loyal only to their feudal overlords - who in turned pledged themselves to the Shogun. The loyal samurai vassals would follow their leader not only in life but also in death. Sometimes they would commit seppuku, or harikiri, when their lord wad defeated. The mood of the time was militaristic; the way of the warrior ("bushido") was the spirit of "chivalry".

From 1338 (or 1333 - depending upon how one figures it), following the overthrow of the Hojos, the Muromachi Period began. It lasted until 1573. It was during this time that Portugese traders, in 1543, arrived as the first Westerners to set foot on Japanese soil. Blown off course in their way to China, the Portuguese were thrust, more than landed, on Tanegashima Island in southwestern Japan, because of a fierce storm. These Westerners brought the first firearms to Japan. Missionaries from Portugal, Spain and Italy soon followed, and tens of thousands of converts were made, most of these in the port cities of Kyushu around Nagasaki.

Ieyasu Tokugawa became Shogun in 1603, and the city of Edo was his seat of government. After 1638 the Tokugawa Shoguns closed the islands to the outside world, except for limited trade with the Dutch, Chinese and Koreans.

Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the U.S. Navy, in 1853, sailed his four "Black Ships" into Lower Tokyo Bay. This was to be the greatest single factor in reopening Japan to the outside world. It was the forerunner of trade treaties with the United States of America, Russia, Great Britain, the Netherlands and France.

In 1867, the Tokugawa Shogunate was overthrown, and with that began the period known as the Meiji Restoration. In the latter part of 1868, under Emperor Meiji, the samurai began their unprecedented work of change, modernization and westernization. An open-door policy replaced the strict closed-door policy of the Tokugawa period. A consitutional monarchy was established. Japan fought and won two wars in this period - the Sino-Japanese War of 1884-5 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. As a result of these wars, Japan took possession of Formosa and South Sakhalin. In World War I, Japan joined with the United States and the Allies and was recognized as one of the world's great powers.

Much more could be told of the dissolution of the Shogunate, the abandonment of feudalism and the establishment of modern government during the Meiji period. It is a long study in itself and is of considerable interest. At this point, however, we will simply state that it was a major turning point in Japanese history.

In 1926, the Showa era began with the succession of the present Emperor, Hirohito, to the throne. During this era, militarism and exp sionism dominated the political, economical and social life of Japan. The militaristic groups seized power after precipitating the war against China in 1937, and the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

In August of 1945, following the devastation by atomic bombs of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Emperor played the key role in causing the Japanese people to accept their defeat in this war. The people would only listen to their emperor. When he personally announced the end of the war over the radio, it sent a shock wave through the hearts of the people. Some of the militarists wanted to continue "to the last man", but the Emperor had spoken. The war was over.

The Allied Forces occupied Japan under the command of the late General Douglas MacArthur for nearly seven years. In April of 1952 the country regained its sovereignty; at that time the Peace Treaty signed at SanFrancisco in September of 1951 went into effect. Since then Japan has taken great strides in its economic recovery. Once again it has taken it place in the community of nations. Japan is a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Asian Development Bank.

The Religion The two major religions of Japan are Shintoism and Buddhism. Confusianism, although little in evidence, has also had strong influence on the Japanese mind. Ninety-six per cent (96%) of the people presently living in Japan claim to be Buddhists, Shintoists and adherents of Confusianism - usually all at once. Shintoism is a polytheistic folk religion in which both men (ancestors) and nature are worshipped and regarded as gods. Shinto (the "way of the gods (kami)") is native to Japan, but its origins are lost in the ancient past. The "kami" is at the core of Shintoism; it is the mysterious power considered to be the source of human life and existence. Shintoism exphasizes "true heart", that is, sincerity, pure heart, uprightness. Purification of body and spirit is necessary to produce the right state of mind. According to Shinto mythologies, in the beginning a male deity and a female deity married, and out of this union came mountains, rivers, seas, planets, animals, human beings and other deities. The most important deity is the Sun Goddess (Amerterasu); she is believed to be the ancestress of the Japanese imperial family. There are over three hundred thousand (300,000+) shrines scattered throughout Japan where other deities are venerated. Buddhism has more followers in Japan than any other religion. About ninety per cent (90%) of the people claim it. This religion was founded by Siddartha Gautama in India in 563 B.C. It originated as a Hindu reform movement which advocates the practice of meditation as a means of enlightenment. (Buddha means "the Enlightened One".) It came to Japan by way of Korea in 538 A.D. Buddha himself wrote nothing, but his/is (wisdom) said to have flowed into his followers. Buddhist scripture developed later - after Gautama's death. The basic teaching of Buddhism is that all life is filled with anguish because of man's base desire for temporal things. It teaches all people to eliminate the root cause of suffering by following physical, mental and spiritual disciplines. Only then can one reach "Nirvana", the state of true happiness, peace and bliss - which lives on after death. Buddhism began in a humble way, but developed great systems of doctrines, philosphy and art. It has many, many volumes of lengthy scripture. In Japan, Buddhism exists side by side with Shintoism, and it sometimes overlaps with Shintoism in the mind of the people. Many Japanese go through Shinto rites when they marry and dedicate their children; but when they die, Buddhist funeral rites are performed. It is not unusual to find a Shinto altar in a side chamber of a Buddhist temple, either.

About one per cent (1%) of the Japanese are avowed atheists. Yet many from this rank are said to go through some of the relgious superstitious practices of their families "just in case".

Another one per cent (1%) in Japan lay claim to some form of Christianity.

Christianity in Japan This will be a quick pace, often with giant steps, through the history of Christianity in Japan. The first part covers the years 1543 to 1853 A.D. In 1543, Portuguese traders on their way to China were blown off course by a typhoon and were shipwrecked on one of Japan's southern islands. They were the first Westerners to set foot in Japan. Soon after trade was established, Christian missionaries began very aggressive work on the island of Kyushu around Nagasaki. In 1549, Francis Xavier, a Jesuit, came and established missions. By the year 1600 there were over three hundred thousand (300,000+) Christians in Japan - in spite of a 1589 edict banning Christianity. Opposition to Christianity mounted, and

in 1599, twenty-six Christians were crucified in Nagasaki. By 1614 Christianity had gone underground at best. By this time many people had either been deported, imprisoned and tortured, or put to death because of their faith in Christ Jesus. By 1638 Japan was closed to all outside religions - especially Christianity. (Only limited trade with the Koreans, Chinese and Dutch was permitted.) The doors remained closed for over two hundred years.

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry's entrance into Lower Tokyo Bay with his "Four Black Ships" acted as a spark which led to the "burning down" of the closed doors of Japan. He was able to negotiate a treaty in 1854 that opened two ports to American trade. Perry's contact with the Japanese might have been the immediate cause of this change, but the people of Japan were also changing. When he came on their horizon, the Japanese were ready to accept and tolerate Christianity and western culture. Christianity was not to enjoy the same expansive growth that it had in the sixteenth century. It grew slowly and was suspect as a "western religion". Even after the anti-Christian edicts were officially lifted in 1873, growth was slow and people were reluctant to put aside the way of their ancestors. Still, the various church bodies sent their missioary forces. The Reformed, Dutch Reformed, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and other protestant denominations came to christianize this "heathen band."

At best, Christianity enjoyed an up-and-down roller coaster mission endeavor in Japan. Just when Christianity was starting to show amazing progress in Japan in the latter part of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, the Gospel had to confront the Japanese Christians' adverse reaction to denominationalism. It was their feeling that there should be no little denominational groups. Such groups were unable to stand on their own because of their smallness and weakness. The Japanese Christians desired one large church body to which all could adhere and practice their Christianity. Sadly, the denominations in Japan at that time buckled under the pressure. This set the scene for unionistic practices and liberal theology which eventually resulted in a growing acceptance of sycretism and rationalism by the churches. (These unionistic practices would have their effect on the WELS as barriers when it began its work in Japan many years later.) In the early 1900's two German missionaries, Spinner and Schmiedel, brought elements of negative higher criticism to the shores of Japan. They abused verbally and persistently the conservative theology of American missionaries by belittling their teachings. Liberal theology dealt a devastating blow to orthodox Christianity in Japan. Many who once clung to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God joined the camps of the false prophets in the liberal churches of that time.

Then, the strong nationalistic spirit of the Japanese people took its toll. Christianity was getting too strong, according to the government's view. In harsh reaction the government issued an Imperial Rescript in 1890. This decree declared in no uncertain terms that the Christian view of God and morality was firmly rejected. The Japanese were to remember their "roots", it seems. All good Japanese were to consider the emperor, not God, or any other god, as their head. As the spirit of nationalism grew, Christianity and even parts of Japanese religions were disgarded.

The rebound came between 1912 and 1926 for Christianity. The political climate in Japan began to moderate.

Tensions eased. More church bodies were allowed to enter Japan. Among them was the United Lutheran Church in America. This fourteen year period was highlighted by thousands of evangelism meetings. During this time churches increased from 79,000 to 110,000 in membership. How long would this active period last? The dark clouds of militarism and expansionism were forming, and by the 1930s the storm hit. So ends the second part of the history of Christianity in Japan.

By 1931 Japan was known as a world class military power. It had badly beaten its bigger neighbor in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895; it had crushed the Russian naval fleet in 1905; by 1910 it had annexed Korea; and during World War I had exacted excessive demands on China. Now, Japan's "hawks" wanted to reach out for more. Only the United States of America openly opposed this quest of military expansionism. It was the American missionary who became guilty by association and felt the harsh reaction of the Japanese government. During this time, if a missionary went on furlough, he could not return to Japan. Those who remained in Japan became the targets of government reaction and fanatics. To further show its position, the government renewed the Imperial Rescript of 1890 - focusing on the American missionaries. The Japanese considered this more an act of patriotism than a religious counter attack. Emperor worship now was described as a patriotic action and attendance at Shinto shrines was not religiously oriented. By 1936 the National Council of Churches stated that it too accepted the government's definition that attendance at Shinto shrines was non-religious. Another low came in 1939. The "Religious Bodies Law" brought all churches - including and especially Christian ones - into one group called a "kyodan". Again, most of the churches represented in Japan at that time bowed under the pressure of the government. On October 17, 1940, the various protestant churches announced their willingness to form a kyodan (party, association). This kyodan was known as the United Church of Christ in Japan. To say the least, it was a wretched compromise of Christian doctrine and practice.

During World War II the heat was turned up to a boil. The government formed the "Japan Wartime Religious-Patriotic Association." This brought all Christian church groups, Shintoists and Buddhists into the same kyodan. Some churches gave in completely; others compromised only what they were absolutely forced to. There were those, like the Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventists, as well as the Episcolpalians and Holiness Church, who refused to cooperate. These were either disbanded, put into prison, or forced to go underground. The government even outlawed certain Christian hymns; two of those on the black list were "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God". All church services were required to open with five minutes of obeissance in the direction of the imperial palace and praying for the war dead. Throughout World War II the Christian churches suffered terrible things at the hands of the Japanese government. When that war came to an end, so did the suffering.

Shortly after the end of World War II Christian missionaries returned to Japan to find a very receptive Japanese people awaiting them. Crowds of people were eager to hear of the true God and His Word's promises. It was not as though all of Japan had turned to Christianity; it hadn't. But, the field was open and it was fertile. Into this field stepped the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, guided by the commission and promise of its Lord.

OUR WELS MISSION IN JAPAN

Our "First" Mission Effort The Lord had opened the doors of Japan for the Gospel to be preached openly there after World War II. Our WELS entered six years after the door opened. The General Mission Board of our Synod had discussed doing mission work in Japan prior to 1951, but the matter remained in the discussion state. When our 1951 WELS Convention took place, Committee No. 8 recommended that work in Japan be placed under the canopy of the Spiritual Welfare Commission; our primary work was to be among the military personel. This recommendation was altered by the convention when it got to the floor with the following resulting recommendation:

> "We recommend that the General Mission Board ask the Lutheran Spiritual Welfare Commission to place a man in Tokyo, a) to care for our service men, and b) to investigate the mission opportunities in Japan."

This altered recommendation was adopted by the Synod, and with that adoption our mission work in Japan had its official beginnings.

On October 20, 1951, Pastor Fred Tiefel received the Call to Japan from our Lutheran Spiritual Welfare Commission. Pastor Tiefel accepted the Call and began his extensive preparations for the great assignment the Lord had given him through the Synod. On February 16, 1952, Pastor Tiefel set sail aboard the S.S. India Mail from Portland, Oregon; his destination was Yokohama, Japan. As soon as he arrived in Yokohama he looked for a place to set up his base of operations. He decided on the Yokohama Hotel; it served as his headquarters and living quarters until he found a house to rent about a year later. It was then that Mrs. Tiefel joined her husband in Japan.

During the first seventeen months that Pastor Tiefel was in Japan, he spent much of his time doing mission work among the Japanese. His instruction classes grew in number to such a degree that time and energy made it necessary for him to refuse some requests. The Spiritual Welfare Commission could only determine from Pastor Tiefel's reports that there was a vast field of mission work in the Tokyo-Yokohama area. That commission in turn recommended to the General Mission Board that Pastor Tiefel be considered as a foreign missionary and that he work under the supervision and policies of the General Mission Board. This recommendation went to the WELS in convention in 1953. When that August convention ended, Pastor Tiefel was called as missionary and Japan was designated as a mission field of our Synod. The Lord had opened the door, and by his grace we were able to walk through it.

Pastor Tiefel returned to Japan with renewed zeal for the difficult task that awaited him. Now under the guidance of an executive committee of the General Mission Board, Pastor Tiefel was also assured of our Synod's commitment to the Japan field because it had authorized the calling of another missionary to join him. It would be almost three years before that call would be filled. During that time Pastor Tiefel concentrated on learning the very difficult Japanese language and instructing the Japanese. The first worship service was held in January of 1955. Until that time the sharing and proclaiming process was done through Sunday Schools and instruction classes. Finally, in the spring of 1956, Richard Seeger, a seminary graduate, was assigned to the Japan field. He looked forward to joining PastorTiefel in his work. Unfortunately, Missionary Seeger would never be able to do this.

On October 14, 1956, Pastor Richard Seeger was commissioned as the second missionary sent by our WELS to Japan. Although he was ready to go to Japan in the fall of 1956, he would not leave until the spring of 1957. The simple reason is that Pastor Tiefel would not accept him as a fellow worker.

Already in 1955 Pastor Tiefel began to express his disapproval of how the WELS was dealing with the erring LC-MS. Without describing this well-known controversy in detail, it did take its toll in Japan as well as stateside. When it became evident to Pastor Tiefel that our Synod was not going to break fellowship with the LC-MS as soon as he - and some others of our Synod - thought it should be done, he felt constrained to submit his resignation from the WELS. Even after discussing the matter with our Synod's president, Pastor O.J. Naumann, and with members of the General Mission Board, there was no change in attitude. Pastor Tiefel resigned in February, 1957. He would not meet with representatives of our Synod in April, 1957, in Japan. What is more, when Pastor Tiefel resigned, that meant the end of our property holdings in Japan. By law, our Synod could not hold title to property in Japan because it did not have the needed three registered workers there to incorporate. All the property (a piece of land with the chapel and residence on it in Tokyo) was in the name of Pastor Tiefel. Without trying to judge his motives, the reason he gave for not returning the property to our Synod is that the Synod was no longer the one which had sent him to work in Japan, and this meant that Tiefel was the one who represented the "true" Synod in Japan. This ended our first mission effort in Japan, spanning the years of 1952 into the first part of 1957.

Our Present Mission Effort Missionary Seeger and his wife arrived in Japan on April 9, 1957; it was almost two weeks before Easter. Three gentlemen were on hand to greet them - and thank God they were in view of the situation! The Rev. O.J. Naumann, President of the WELS, the Rev. E. Hoenecke, Chairman of the Board for Foreign and Heathen Missions (now the Board for World Missions), and the Rev. H. Shiley, the new chairman of the Japan Mission Board. These three men had come to Japan to help the Seegers get settled and to discuss the mission property with Pastor Tiefel - and other related matters of the work to be done. (They would not be able to meet with Pastor Tiefel.)

1957 was the new beginning for WELS in Japan. Residing in Itabashi, Tokyo, Missionary Seeger spent much of the next two years in language study. He would begin to do mission work within months of his arrival in Japan because of the opportunities the Lord gave him. English classes are popular among the Japanese. Missionary Seeger added the important ingredient of the Lord's Word and began English Bible classes. The seed was being sown. Another English Bible Class and more seed was sown. This would produce fruit. The Lord would cause to grow from this humble beginning our Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (LECC) in Japan.

The Lord provided the next workers for Japan from Japan itself. Pastor Richard Poetter had served as an LC-MS missionary in Japan, but for conscience reasons left that synod. He joined our Synod and was called to serve as one of our missionaries in 1958. With him came another very gifted layman, Mr. Ryuichi Igarashi. To the date

of this writing, he continues to handle the legal matters of our mission church body in Japan, translates Christian literature, teaches Sunday School, preaches sermons and applies his proficient use of seven languages for the benefit of witnessing Christ in any way he can. Pastor Poetter and Mr. Igarashi (soon called deacon Igarashi by his fellow Christians) moved to the Ibaraki prefecture city of Mito. Pastor Seeger continued the work in the Tokyo area. On May 22, 1959, the Japan Board sent a letter to our missionaries with the following instructions: 1. Our goal in Japan is to establish an indigenous church. 2. Pastor Poetter is to continue working in Mito; Pastor Seeger is to move to another field (in Tsuchiura possibly) when a third missionary arrives in Japan. In August of 1959, our WELS in convention in Saginaw, Michigan, authorized this third missionary.

Almost two years passed. After many pastors declined the call, the Japan Board requested the Assignment Committee of our Synod for a seminary graduate. Luther Weindorf received and accepted the Call. He, his wife, and two sons arrived in Japan in mid-August of 1961. The Weindorf family lived with the Poetters in Mito - until suitable housing could be found for his family.

It was during this time that Mr. Shoichi Onomura, a member of our Tokyo mission congregation, asked to be trained as a pastor. He would receive some financial assistance as he prepared for this calling, the sum of fifty follars ($50) per month. Mr. Onomura was the first of several of our Japanese church members to begin training for the pastoral ministry.

Pastor Seeger began working in Tsuchiura and as this mission grew in strength, the Lord provided more people in neighboring Ibaraki Prefecture for his church. This time it was the prefectural capital city, Utsunomiya, where our work centered. Pastor Seeger established contacts here and in Shimotsuma, while Pastor Poetter was led to a family in Oarai, east of Mito. By the end of 1960, our missionaries in Japan had nineteen Japanese souls, including twelve communicants under their pastoral care. Missionaries Seeger and Poetter, assisted by Mr. Igarasgi and Mr. Onomura, were now working regularly in eight cities: Tokyo, Daigo, Hitachi, Ishioka, Mito, Tsuchiura, Shimotsuma (later moved to Shimodate) and Oarai. Actually, Utsunomiya could almost be considered the eleventh city because of the efforts being made there.

Our field was developing. We needed a strategy. In September of 1960, the Mission Council of our Japan field adopted an overall strategy that would affect our mission outreach for the next two decades. Concentrating on the Ibaraki and Tochigi prefectures - since we were the only Lutheran group in those areas, the Mission Council determined a plan of attack. These prefectures bordered each other, but the poor secondary roads made travel between the two almost impossible. The plan involved concentrating our work on the two major highways going north out of Tokyo: Highway 6 through Tsuchiura, Mito and Hitachi, and Highway 4 through Oyama and Utsunomuiya. The idea was to branch out from these highways in either direction. It was a good plan. By the end of 1961, Missionary Poetter could report that our mission in Japan now had 47 souls of whom 32 are communicants.

A key part of our Japan mission field is the Mission Council. It formally organized on November 15, 1961. It began as a regular

meeting of our missionaries. With its formal organization its membership and purpose were now expanded. The Mission Council was now to consist of the missionaries and Japanese church leaders "deemed responsible by the majority of the active missionaries." This council was responsible for beginning the Japanese church periodical, "Church News."

Within four months the Mission Council approved the articles of the Luthern Evangelical Christian Church. Mr. Yamada, a lawyer, and Deacon Igarashi guided the Mission Council in this step so that the articles would conform to Japanese law. April 9, 1962, on this day the Delegate Church Council in Japan was formed. On April 29, 1962, the DCC took a happy and big step by God's grace; it accepted and adopted the articles of incorporation for the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church in Japan. This took place at Mito in conjunction with the Spring Bible Conference. The first budget adopted was for $10,000, $500 of which the Japanese churches pledged. The church properties previously registered in the names of our missionaries were now listed under the incorporation of the LECC. In regard to this matter, the DCC resolved to accept these properties "with the moral agreement that the LECC shall administer them according to the wishes of the WELS." (The articles of incorporation were approved by the government of the Ibaraki Prefecture on January 29, 1963.) The LECC closed 1962 by gathering to dedicate the mission house and chapel in Mito on December 30th; the cost was $23,000. The Lord was with his people, his promise to all who faithfully use his Word and sacraments prevailed.

In 1963, when Missionary Weindorf was completing his language studies, the September meeting of the Mission Council divided the field of labors in Japan in this way:

1. Seeger: Tokyo and Utsonumiya City
2. Poetter: Mito, Ishioka, Shinodate (formerly Shimotsu)
3. Weindorf: Hitachi, Tsuchiura and Daigo.

Missionary Weindorf excitedly began another new "field" in Japan at that time, too; he began a ministry among the blind. With the help of Mr. Keeichi Takahashi of Mito, the two men produced Japanese Braille materials and distributed them to as many as twenty blind contacts. Pastor Weindorf's base of operation was the new chapel-parsonage building in Tsuchiura; it was dedicated on July 7, 1963. After the dedication service, Pastor Tatsushino Yamada was installed as a pastor; he came to us from another Lutheran body, and after a colloquy was accepted for call into the LECC.

During the years 1964 and 1965, our field and the Japan Board of the Board for World Missions were able to resolve a problem of the site selection for the Tokyo mission. The so-called "Tokyo Site Question" involved some lengthy letters between the field and the Japan Board as well as the direct involvement of the BWM and our Synod's President, O.J. Naumann, Executive Secretary of BWM, E. Hoenecke and Pastor Koeniger, from our Synod's Committee on Relief. After these men met with the missionaries in Japan, mutual agreement resulted in the selection of the Higashi Kurume (NW Tokyo) for our Tokyo base of operations. In addition, the three men mentioned above agreed that Japan needed a fourth and fifth man to have the needed complement of missionaries to serve the field.

Another concern - indeed, a problem - in the Japan field broke to the surface in 1963. It was the problem of educating the children of the missionaries. Among our three missionaries in Japan at this time, there were seven children. (When Pastor Norbert Meier arrived in 1964, the number jumped to ten children.) There were four solutions offered, but not all of them were possible. They were: 1. Attend a local Japanese school; 2. Attend the American School in Tokyo; 3. Be taught by their parents; or 4. Be taught by a teacher called by the Synod. The last solution (4.) was not possible because our Synod was not able to fund a teacher for Japan at this time. (What problems for the missionaries this would have solved if a teacher had been provided!) Solution no. 1. was not much of a solution at all - unless the Japanese schools were used for kindergarten and early primary grades. At the center of this "solution" was the problem of the whole character of the Japanese school system - especially at that time. The school years in Japan end in February; this did not coincide with furlough dates for the missionaries, for one thing. It also does not allow the children to be absent from school on Christian church related holidays, i.e. Christmas, Easter, etc. Added to that was the intense competitive nature of the Japanese schools (referred to earlier), a condition which strongly inhibited the American students because they were not as readily accepted as the national students; it simply was a very difficult adjustment. Solution no. 2*worked fine for the missionary's children living in Tokyo, but for the other missionaries it meant sending their children to live in Tokyo during the week. This would include only the older primary children; understandably a missionary and his wife would not want to have their young children boarding away from them during the week. For the most part, then, this left solution no. 3. This also caused caused some real problems, problems - both for the education of the children and for carrying out effective mission work by the missionary.

In a September 4, 1963, letter, one of the missionaries explained the great difficulties connected with educating his children at home. The basic problem with doing this is the Japanese culture itself. When someone comes to your door in Japan - no matter what time of day - you do not turn him away. It is considered most impolite and insensitive by the Japanese to do this. So, if a new mission contact would come to the door (as they often did), the missionary and his wife would stop whatever they were doing - including educating their children - to show hospitality to their guest. The result was the education of the missionary's children suffered greatly. If allowed to continue under such adverse conditions, the children would not be able to maintain the grade level corresponding to their age comparing them with their American counterparts.

Our Synod, the BWM and the Japan Board were not insensitive to the problem. Until funds were available, however, they could only encourage the missionaries to do what they could to obtain the best education available for their children under the circumstances. (This problem was not truly resolved until a DMLC graduate was assigned to the Nozomi School in Tsuchiura for the first time in 1971.)

* In regard to solution no. 2, it should be said that this was not feasible until the Higashe Kurume (NW Tokyo) site was purchased in 1965.

In 1964, Pastor Norbert Meier accepted the Call to serve his Lord in Japan. Two years of language study lie ahead for him, but his entrance on the field was a cause for encouragement and joy among the missionaries. Just about the time he finishing his language study, the 1966 reports showed again how the Lord had blessed our work in Japan. Now we had 112 souls, 86 of whom were communicants, in the LECC. There was one organized congregation, Grace in Mito, and nine preaching stations. We had three active missionaries - Poetter, Seeger and Weindorf, one deacon - Mr. Igarashi, one pastor - Yamada. And, we had one missionary - Meier - ready to enter full time work.

The year 1966 began with great hope and expectation. We were "fully" staffed. The Lord knew this was not to last. In March, 1966, Missionary Weindorf accepted a call stateside to Seattle, Washington. The second shoe dropped that same month; Missionary Seeger, a ten-year veteran on our Japan field, accepted the Call to be Friendly Counselor to our Hong Kong mission. We were back to two expatriate missionaries, half of what we needed to work with effective aggressiveness in the field at that time. At the same time, it should be noted that the workers who were on the field carried on a very aggressive - and exhausting - ministry in reaching out to those without the light of Christ in their lives.

More changes were on the horizon. In 1967, Pastor Harry Shiley, Chairman of the Executive Committee for Japan Missions (the Japan Board), asked to be relieved of his duties. He had served as chairman for the Japan Board's first decade. Pastor Poetter, now appointed as the "Field Representative", offered these words in his February 8, 1967, letter to the new chairman, Pastor Karl Bast:"He (Pastor Shiley) has been God's gift to the Japan Mission in guidance, instruction, patience and humor. A feeling of closeness and dependency has grown in us toward him. He has faithfully carried out a difficult task for these many years."

The Lord continued to provide for his people as the work continued under difficult circumstances in Japan. In May of 1967, Kermit Habben, a seminary graduate, was assigned to Japan. His acceptance of the Call brought our expatriate missionary staff to three. He began his language study as soon as he arrived on the field in the fall. Still, we needed more mission workers. The Lord would provide pastors from among the Japanese Christians. Several young men requested to be trained as pastors. With this development, another step was taken toward the establishment of an indigenous church.

Pastor Yamada had already come to us by colloquy from another church in the summer of 1963; he began his studies in April of the next year. Of those who first entered our seminary program in Japan, Yoshida and Oshino would remain until their graduation, the first in 1970 and the second man a year later.

The seminary program in Japan had its humble beginnings in 1967 in Mito; Yoshida was the first student. Oshino began in 1968, along with Suzuki and Yamaguchi. That same year the Japan Board began calling for the fourth missionary for Japan. This man was to specialize as head of the seminary. Pastor Harold Johne of St. Paul, Minnesota, accepted this call in 1969. He arrived on the field in August. A short time after his arrival, the Rev. Yukuchi Makise, a pastor of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, left his church and became a member of our congregation in Higashi Kurume. In October he passed a colloquy and was called to serve the church in Ashikaga.

Another decision of the Japan Board and the LECC would affect the seminary until this present day. On April 21, 1969, it was agreed that Pastor Johne should live in Tsuchiura and that the seminary be located there. The 1971 Synod Convention authorized $50,000 for the construction of a multi-purpose building in Tsuchiura which would house the seminary as well as the Nozomi congregation. In addition, a printshop would be located on that site. At that same convention a fifth expatriate missionary for Japan was authorized.

Mr. Yoshida completed his studies at the end of 1969, and was ordained in a service that coincided with the Delegate Church Council of the LECC meeting in Mito on January 15, 1970. Oshino and Suzuki graduated the next year; Oshino then replaced Pastor Makise at Ashikaga, and Suszuki was called to Utsonomiya City. In 1971, then, our Japan mission field had five national pastors: Yoshida, Yamada, Makise, Oshino and Suszuki. Instead of the usual "San" after their names ("san" is used for Mr., Mrs. or Miss), they would have "Sensei" after their names ("sensei" means "most honorable one" or "teacher, master"). Our mission also had three national lay pastoral helpers: Ryuichi Igarashi San (Literary expert), Kiyoshi Nemoto San (printer and evangelist) and Keiichi Takahashi (printer of Japanese Braille).

September 15, 1971, was another glorious day for our Japan mission field. On that day the three buildings in Tsuchiura were dedicated to the glory of our Triune God. The largest one served as the all-purpose center; it provided a large meeting hall, two seminary classrooms and a chapel for the Nozomi congregation. The second building, located in back of the all-purpose center, was for the print shop of the LECC. The third building was the parsonage for Pastor Johne; this home was built next to the old (and very small) Nozomi church. On the other side of the old church is the parsonage of Tsuchiura pastor (Habben, at that time). The old church building was put to good use - and still is being used for this purpose: it became the school house for our missionary children. DMLC graduate, Eric Hartzell, was called to teach for one year. Since that time, a new teacher has been called every year. Again, something for which all of us can thank and praise our Lord!

A disappointing note is that in 1971 Makise Sensei was suspended from the ministry, and a year later Suzuki Sensei would leave the ministry. This tested the spiritual strength of our LECC. The Lord guided it through these heartaches, and kept his people directed on the pathway of faithfulness and dedicated service in the Japan field.

The Lord led Mr. Menuhide Nakamoto to begin his seminary training in 1972. He would become our fourth national pastor of the LECC. This gifted man, a native of Okinawa, remains an energetic pastor to the time of this writing - even though a childhood bout with polio now makes it necessary for him to use crutches in order to walk.

1972 found our LECC thriving in activity. Pastor Meier was conducting services in a second Tokyo area (besides Higashi Kurume). The chapel-parsonage in Hitachi was under construction; Pastor Yoshida would work there for several years. Our literature and radio outreach programs - made possible by the WELS Mass Media Fund - were fast becoming the most effective ways of reaching thousands, perhaps millions, of Japanese. Our Braille program was growing, reaching more and more of the physically blind as well with the gospel of Christ Jesus.

Our school for the missionaries' children received another teacher. Vicar-teacher David Halldin replaced Eric Hartzell. (Mr. Halldin would return to the field later as a self-sustaining lay worker. He, too, has proven to be a tremedous asset for our work in Japan.)

Two of our members from Nozomi (Hope) congregation in Tsuchiura continued their education by enrolling at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. While Miss Sakai and Miss Tomito began their studies at New Ulm, Mr. David Johnson, a DMLC graduate, accepted the call to serve as our third teacher in Japan. (For a complete listing of our teachers and their years of service in Japan, please refer to the addendum sheet with the heading, "Missionary Years of Service in Japan.") Miss Tomito would return to Japan to serve our church and seminary as our "girl Friday". To this day she serves as a secretary, translater, editer for some of our print shop materials, Sunday School teacher, and in any other way she can. Another great blessing for our mission work in Japan, especially in Tsuchiura.

As time passes, the changes came to our Japan field. In 1974, Missionary Meier accepted a call to serve a mission congregation in Fairbanks, Alaska. Two men accepted calls to our Japan field that year: Pastor Herbert Winterstein and Pastor Roger Falk. Both would spend almost two years in language study before they could take over the responsibilities of full time mission work.

1974 turned out to be a banner year for our printing operations. The LECC was able to purchase a new offset press - thanks to the generosity of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society. The old press also was overhauled. This resulted in 91,400 newspaper slip-ins and evagelism tracts. Mail contacts increased to 1,000.

Also in 1974, the Literature Society of the All-Lutheran Free Conference published a hymnal in Japanese. It turned out to be one our LECC could use with great blessing.

In 1975, Mr. Akagami and another student began their pre-seminary training. Mr. Akagami would continue until his graduation and call into the full-time ministry in 1981. Our Synod celebrated its 125th anniversary with "Grace 125" that year, and Pastor Poetter celebrated his 25th anniversary in the ministry in Japan.

The year, 1975, brought our LECC another step closer to becoming a doctrinally mature sister synod to the WELS. The Japanese church unanimously adopted its constitution. What a joy! What a blessing! What an added sense of responsibility and privilege the Lord had given our LECC!

Missionaries Falk and Winterstein began their full-time service in 1976. Missionary Falk would work in Utsonomiya City by preaching on a nce a month basis. Missionary Winterstein was assigned to the Tsuchiura and Gakuen City areas. Missionary Johne, in addition to serving as the head of the seminary, accepted the assignment of two congregations at Ishioka and Ami. The Lord would guide our LECC to find and purchase land in Utsonomiya in 1976, no small blessing - considering the value and the scarcity of land in Japan.

Mr. Nakamoto finished his seminary training in 1977. His graduation and ordination in March was timely; Missionary Winterstein left the field the next month. Pastor Nakamoto was assigned to Shimodate, and Pastor Johne served Tsuchiura during the vacancy.

In that same year three new mission stations opened; they were at Katsuda, Tochigi City and Chiba, an eastern suburb of Tokyo. Other blessings further emphasized the amazing grace of God on our mission work and workers. The LWMS granted funds to furnish the libraries of graduate national pastors; the Mass Media Fund of our WELS supported the rebroadcasting of Sunday services in the evenings with the result of greater response by phone and mail; Sunday School teachers' institutes were begun and would continue on a regular basis. Our WELS in convention resolved that two more expatriate missionaries were to be called to Japan as soon as possible. At this same convention, during the reorganization of the executive committee for Japan missions Pastor Ronald Freier of St. Joseph, Michigan, was elected to the committee and would eventually become its chairman.

In 1978, three more missionaries joined our team in Japan: Pastor David Haberkorn and his family arrived in February; he settled in Tsuchiura during his language study and would remain there to serve that congregation. Pastor Elwood Fromm, after passing a colloquy, completed a year of study at our Mequon seminary. He had served as a missionary in Japan for another synod since 1953. After his year at Mequon, Pastor Fromm was called to Japan and now serves our church in Hitachi. Pastor John Boehringer, our seventh missionary, arrived on the field in October. He would be assigned to serve our congregation in Zushi (near Yokohama) when he completed his language study. (Note: Actually, one doesn't complete his language study of the Japanese; it's an ongoing process. It would be more accurate to say that after a missionary completes the first two years of study in the Japanese, he is ready to begin full time work using a very simple Japanese.) Both Pastors Boehringer and Haberkorn entered the full-time work of preaching the gospel in Japan in 1980.

During 1978 - on November 20th - the missionaries, their families and other members of Atonement Church gathered in their Higashi Kurume sanctuary to praise God for having blessed the Fromms, Johnes and Poetters with 25 years of marriage and 120 total years in foreign service.

Work in the Chiba Prefecture (across the bay from Tokyo) intensified with the assignment of student Akagami of our seminary to serve as vicar under Pastor Yoshida. Because of lack of funds, uncertainties about the congregation's chapel-resident loomed over head. The congregation continued to rent a place of worship, but this often proves to be a detriment for our work in Japan. By God's grace, funds were designated for the new chapel-residence in Chiba by the Board for World Missions in 1980. (One Christian family in the USA had designated $25,000 of a $65,000 gift to be used for the Chiba project.) On September 15th, a year later, the congregation dedicated their land and worship facility for service to the Lord.

1981 marked the beginning of full-time work as a minister of the gospel for W. Akagami. He graduated and was ordained on March 22nd, having accepted the Call to serve the area of Toride, Abiko, Kashiwa and Matsudo. Other developments in that year are worthy of note. Missionary Johne assumed responsibility of Ishioka. Missionary Haberkorn extended his work to Ami. Grace, Mito, together with Peace in Ashikaga and Hope in Tsuchiura adopted the sample congregational constitution in April.

In July of 1981 the LECC officers signed "A Declaration of Church Fellowship with the WELS by the LECC." The congregational representatives and pastors who signed this document sent greetings to their "mother" Synod, rejoicing in the oneness in Christ based on God's Word which we share.

1982 bore the theme which is fitting for any and all the years of our Japan mission, "Praising His Grace." This was the 25th anniversary of the Lutheran Evangelicla Christian Church of Japan. Now, seven expatriate missionaries were reaching out with the good news of Jesus in a country that is 99% heathen. Four national pastors and several more national lay workers shared this privilege of working for their Lord with - and on behalf of - their fellow Christian countrymen.

Pastors Yoshida and Oshino and missionaries Habben and Falk were appointed to serve on the planning committee for the 25th anniversary celebration. On September 12th a festival service of praise and thanksgiving took place at Tsuchiura's Nozomi (Hope) congregation. Pastor Carl Mischke, President of the WELS, delivered the message, declaring that all Christians share God's grace wherever they are in the world. Pastor Oshino translated the message into Japanese and Missionary Falk served as liturgist. Executive Secretary of the WELS Board for World Missions, Theodore Sauer, and the members of the Executive Committee for Japan Missions, Pastor Ronald Freier (Chairman), Mr. Clarence Krause (Vice-chairman) and Pastor William Bernhardt (Secretary) were also on hand for the service. The assembly expressed their deep gratitude after the service to Mr. Krause, Pastor Poetter and Deacon Igarashi for their years of faithful service for our Japan mission.

Around the world our WELS joined in "Praising His Grace" for the blessings the Lord had given during the 25 years of the LECC of Japan. Information kits and special film strip - made especially for this anniversary - gave the members of WELS a closer picture of our field. A special synod-wide "Praising His Grace" offering moved the members of WELS and the LECC to raise $145,000 for the Church Extension Fund of the LECC. This offering enabled the LECC to complete timely building projects and renovations in Japan. Part of the funds were used for the building of a new chapel and the renovation of existing buildings in Ashikaga; another part was used for the relocation of the Shimodate congregation to a new chapel-residence complex in an excellent location. These were dedicated in 1985.

Our LECC experienced more changed in expatriate workers. Pastor John Boehringer accepted a call to California in 1983. Pastor James Behringer of Michigan accepted the call, and began his language studies. Within those two years it became obvious that the Lord probably had other plans for the Behringers than serving him in Japan. In January of 1986, Pastor Behringer accepted a call to California - to a community with a strong Japanese representation nearby. Pastor Glen Heib of Michigan accepted the call to serve his Lord in Japan in the spring of 1986. At almost the same time another change was taking place. Missionary Harold Johne, our 16-year veteran and seminary head, received and accepted the call extended to him by our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon. At this writing the call for a seventh missionary has been delayed because of "lack of funds."

The Lord will provide for his people in Japan as he does all over the world. At the right time, those workers will be called who will be able to share the privilege of reaching out to the people of Japan with the gospel of Christ Jesus. We might wonder how a field that is understaffed can carry the load of responsibilities that exists in Japan. We might be quite concerned about taking hold of the existing opportunities while they are ripe and also reaching into other prefectures in which we already know of people who want to hear more about Jesus. In all of this, we turn to the Lord and wait on his good pleasure. He will provide his workers in a time and in a way that again will cause us amasement - and prompt us to declare all the more his "amazing grace."

Our prayer and hope is that more and more of our Japanese neighbors will be able to sing from a heart of faith, "Show wa lay o eye ee soo, Shoe wa tsu yo ke lay ba...", or as our English-speaking Christians declare in song, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so..."

Sunday School children from Mito City

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Executive Committee for Japan Missions

All executive committees of our Board for World Missions serve a very important and responsible function. They serve as a vital link between the Synod and the field they represent. They are concerned, first of all, with the well-being and effectiveness of our missionaries in the field. The EC also acts as an intermediary when it comes to requesting and requisitioning funds. It helps establish budgets and policies that are particular to the field, but in keeping with the general policies of the Board for World Missions.

As far as our Japan Executive Committee is concerned, it strives to maintain a close and personal contact with our missionaries. Each month it receives at least one letter from each missionary family - along with monthly requisitions and other special requests. The EC responds to each letter with an open letter to the field, called the "Good News O'Gram". Personal notes are attached, in addition to the particular family references made in the field letter. Our monthly communication with the field superintendent is sometimes augmented by a telephone call. The EC telephones other missionaries when it feels the need is there, too.

The executive committee is keenly aware of its responsibility to the Board for World Missions, and ultimately to the Synod, for the mission work of its specific foreign field. It strives to be a brother and friend, providing encouragement, instruction and guidance, where it can. It is responsible for the total well-being of the missionary, his family and his field.

Periodically, in accord with the BWM policy, the executive committee visits the field personally. This usually is done every three years. These visits are vital to the understanding of the executive committee and also foster a good cooperative relationship between it and the field it represents.

The Structure of the LECC of Japan

During our last field visit in April of 1986, the missionaries, pastors of the LECC and the executive committee along with Executive Secretary of the BWM, Pastor Duane Tomhave, spent long hours in meetings in order to clarify the structure and function of the LECC and its relationship to the Executive Committee for Japan Missions. (Please refer to the Addenda, page 4.) With possibly a few small changes, this is the flow chart which describes the communication link and lines of responsibility among the LECC, the Missionary Staff and the Executive Committee.

The "Strategy: of the LECC of Japan

The strategy, or "game plan", expressing the goals of our mission work is important to keep a forward thrust. The foundation of our work will always be the Gospel. Strategy statements help us look at how effectively - and aggressively - we are reaching out with the Word. Our LECC does have a strategy, but we are working on further definitions of our goals in the field, i.e. areas of work, manpower needs, time frames for our goals, etc.

Bible Camps These camps are held twice a year, in the spring and in the summer. The Spring Camp usually is held in April, and the site is our Tsuchiura church. Dozens of people come together to share the studies of books of the Bible, selected Psalms, or some topics on Christian life stewardship. The Summer Camp is often held in August. This two-day camp includes intensive Bible study and an additional half day for recreation. The intent of both camps is for the people participating to grow in their knowledge of the Bible and relate this to their lives as Jesus' followers. The camps are open to young and old alike, and gives our people another opportunity to get better acquainted.

Our Print Shop The source of all our outreach material at this time is the print shop located on the grounds of the Tsuchiura comlex. Mr. Najihara and Miss Saito are responsible for preparing the materials that are sent to them from our LECC for printing. This facility would not be operating any where near its present capability were it not for the generous gifts of the Lutheran Women Missionary Society of WELS. Sunday School materials, tracts, booklets, translations of good Lutheran material, and many other printed items come off the presses in our print shop.

Periodicals Two magazines are printed by our LECC. The "Forward" is a pictorial which features some of the outstanding events of recent months. At the same time, an issue may include some interesting item from the past in order to put our present blessings into perspective. The second periodical is a quarterly publication, "The Rising Sun". Its purpose is comparable to The Northwestern Lutheran. It presents various activities, personal stories and other items of interest in our Japan mission work. The publication is printed in English for distribution in the United States among our pastors, teachers, and congregations. The material is prepared on the field, then sent to the secretary of the executive committee for editing; he send it to the printers.

Informational Kits and Display Kits Available to congregations and individuals upon request is an information kit in packet form. This kit includes a history of our Japan mission work, Japanese Christian educational and worship materials and some Japanese art forms. The display kits provide the users with the opporunity to see various forms of the Japanese pagan relgious pieces, good luck charms and "little gods". It also has samples of our worship literature, Sunday School material, and samples of smaller items of Japanese clothing. This kit must be returned to the executive committee. The information kit may be kept for future use and reference. At this time, Mr. Clarence Krause, the Vice-chairman of our executive committee, handles the distribution of the kits.

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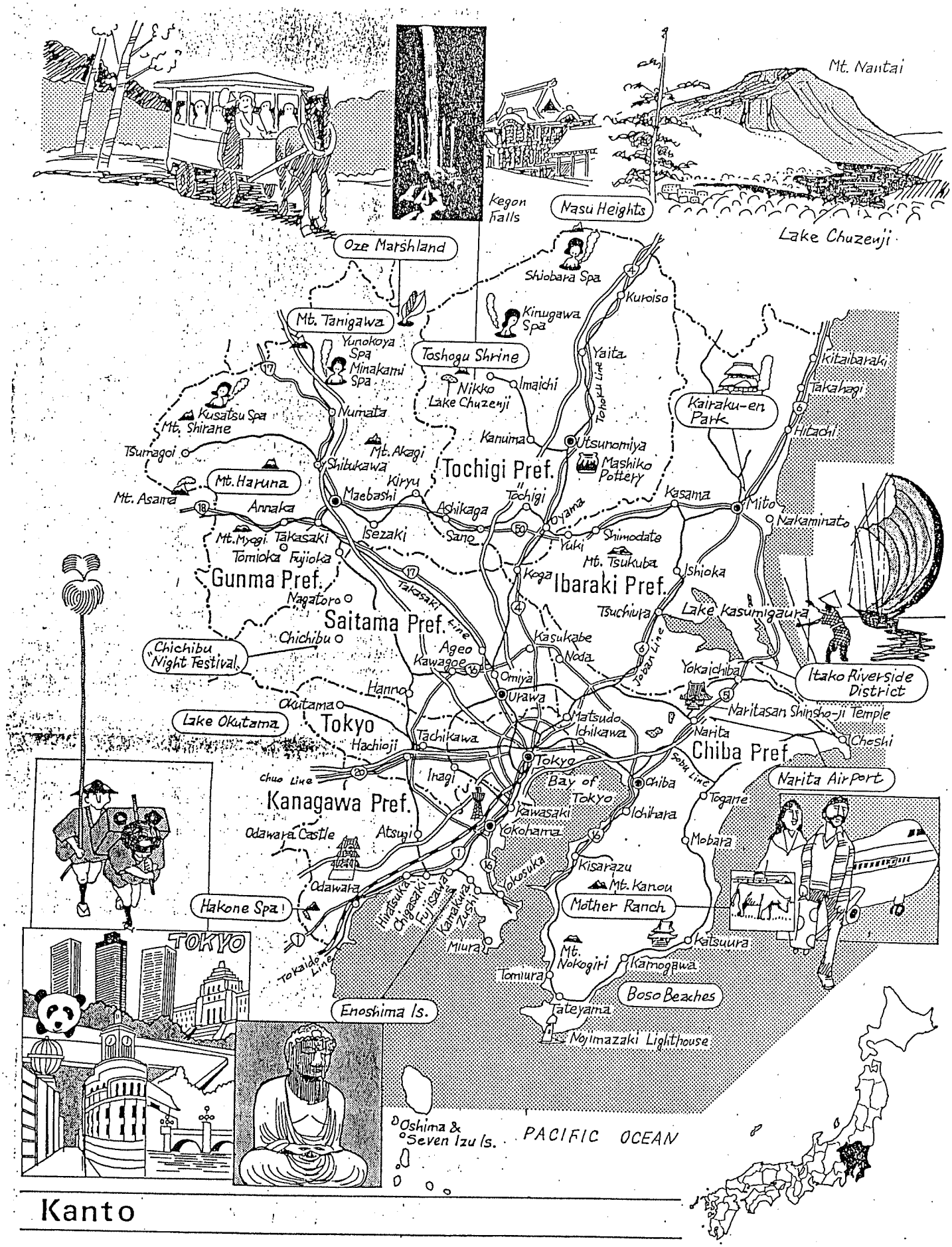
A D D E N D A

with

Pictorial Supplement


Mt. Nantai
Kegon Falls
Nasu Heights
Lake Chuzenji
Oze Marshland
Shiobara Spa
Kuroiso
Mt. Tanigawa
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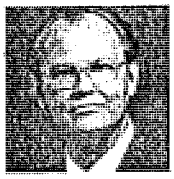
Yunokoya Spa
Minakami Spa
Toshogu Shrine
Yaita
Nikko
Imaichi
Lake Chuzenji
Tohoku Line
Kusatsu Spa
Mt. Shirane
Numata
Kanuma
Utsunomiya
Kairaku-en Park
Kitaibaraki
Takahagi
Hitachi
Tsumagoi
Mt. Akagi
Tochigi Pref.
Mashiko Pottery
Mt. Haruna
Shibukawa
Kiryu
Maebashi
Tochigi
Kasama
Mito
Mt. Asama
Annaka
Ashikaga
Oyama
Nakaminato
Mt. Myogi
Takasaki
Isezaki
Sano
Shimodate
Tomioka Fujioka
Yuki
Mt. Tsukuba
Gunma Pref.
Koga
Ibaraki Pref.
Ishioka
Nagatoro
Tsuchiura
Lake Kasumigaura
Takasaki Line
Saitama Pref.
Kasukabe
Chichibu
Chichibu Night Festival
Ageo
Noda
Kawagoe
Yokaichiba
Itako Riverside District
Omiya
Hanno
Urawa
Okutama
Matsudo
Ichikawa
Naritasan Shinsho-ji Temple
Lake Okutama
Tokyo
Tachikawa
Narita
Choshi
Hachioji
Chiba Pref.
Tokyo
Sobu Line
Narita Airport
Chuo Line
Inagi
Bay of Tokyo
Chiba
Kanagawa Pref.
Togane
Kawasaki
Ichihara
Odawara Castle
Atsugi
Yokohama
Mobara
Kisarazu
Mt. Kanou
Odawara
Yokosuka
Hakone Spa
Hiratsuka
Chigasaki
Fujisawa
Kamakura
Zushi
Mother Ranch
Miura
Katsuura
Mt. Nokogiri
Tomiura
Kamogawa
Tokaido Line
Boso Beaches
Enoshima Is.
Tateyama
Nojimazaki Lighthouse
TOKYO
Oshima & Seven Izu Is.
PACIFIC OCEAN

Kanto

The John Boehringer Family
Zushi & Yokohama

The Richard Poetter's
Mito & Daigo

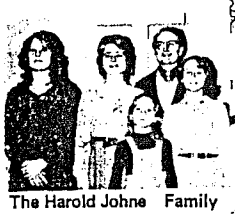


The Roger Folk's
Utsunomiya

The Elwood Fromm
Hitachi City & Katsuda

The David Haberkorn Family
Tsuchiura & Ishioka

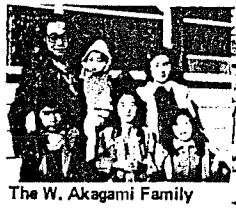
The M. Nakamoto Family
Shimodate



The Harold Johne Family
Tsuchiura & Ami

Deacon R. Igarashi & Family
Mito

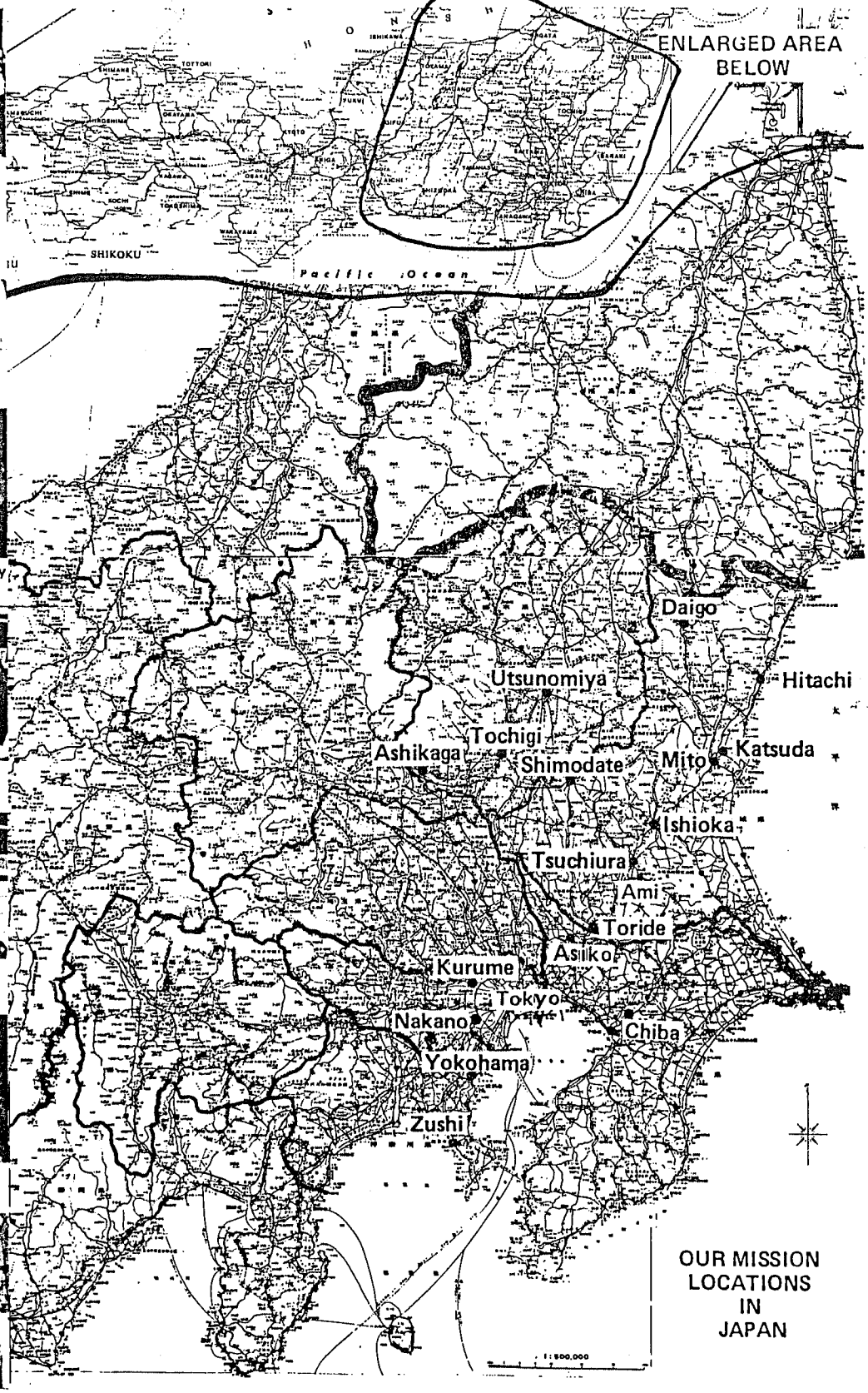
The T. Yoshida Family
Chiba



The W. Akagami Family
Toride

The F. Oshino Family
Ashikaga & Tochigi City

The Kermit Habbey Family
Kurume & Nakano

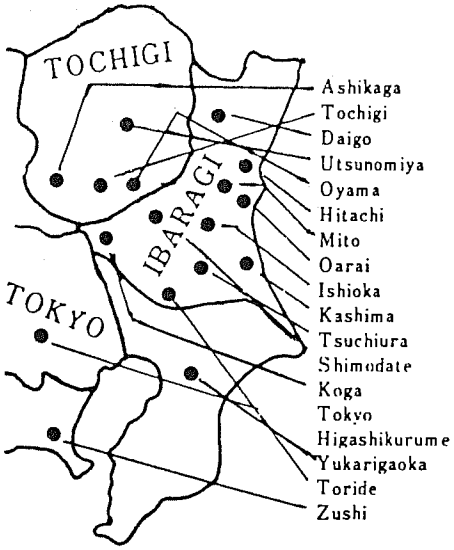


Our Japan Mission

The Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church

"BE MY WITNESSES ... TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH." (Acts 1)

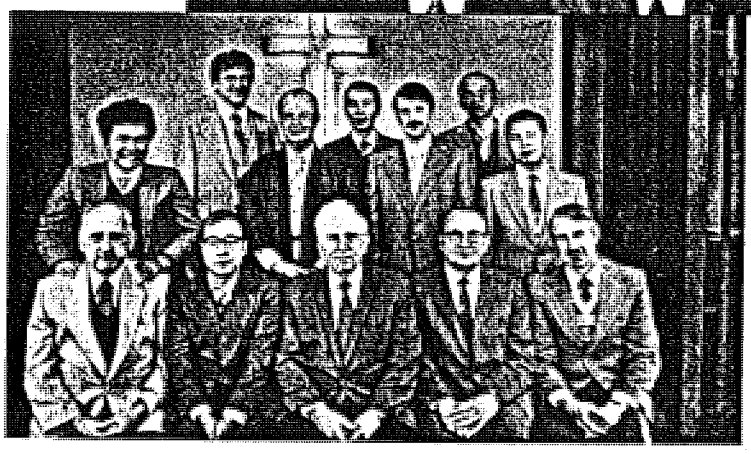
For over 25 years the LECC by God's grace has organized to witness to the millions in Japan who are yet without Jesus Christ in their hearts. Our Fellow Workers in our Japan mission field are united to give faithful witness of the Word according to sound Lutheran teachings.



The Area of our Work

Our Pastors

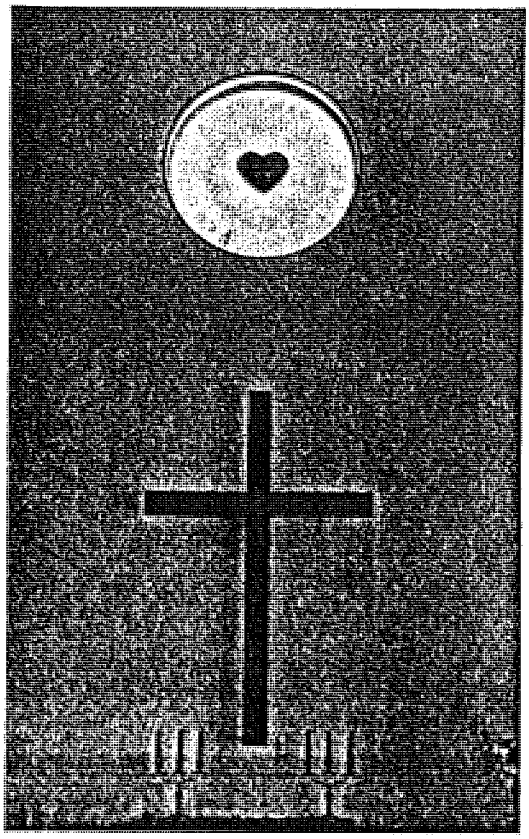
Our Missionaries



1985 Mission Workers (L-R)

Standing: Nakamoto, J. Behringer, R. Falk, Yoshida, D. Haberkorn, Igarashi, Oshino

Sitting: E. Fromm, Akagami, R. Poetter, H. Johne,



E-3-

THE SEED IS THE WORD

"The Harvest is plentiful"!

The souls of over 120 million people redeemed by our Savior need to be reached with the Word of Life.

Baptism

Sunday School

Confirmation

Bible Study

ISAIAH 43 VERSE 1

I have reedeemed you
I have called you by name
You are Mine.

"PRAY THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO SEND FORTH WORKERS INTO HIS FIELD!"

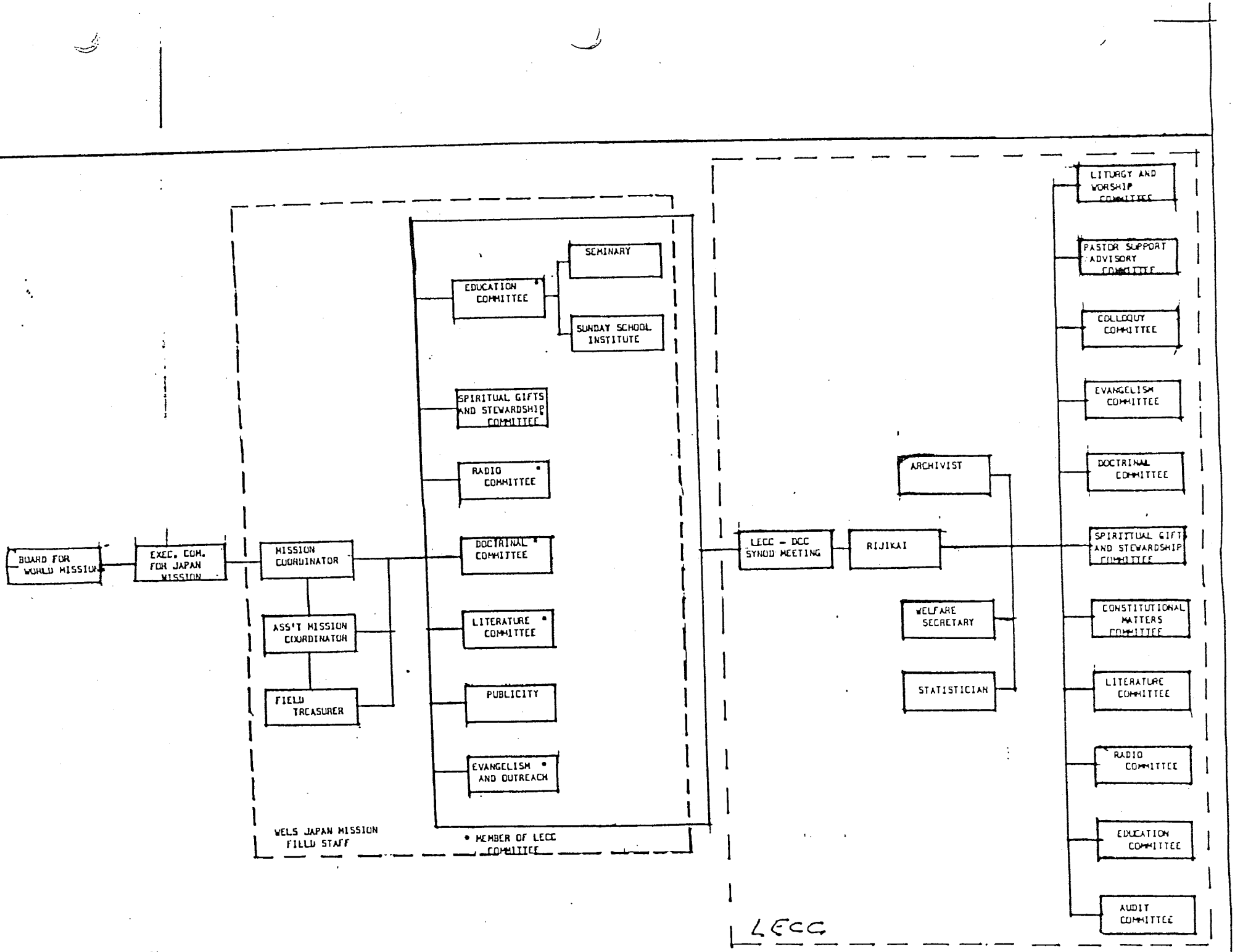
Missionary Years of Service in Japan

	Name	Date of Arrival in Japan	Years/Mo's in Japan to 1/86	Year Lang. Study	Years/Mo's Active
1.	Richard A. Poetter	8/1958	27 yrs. 4 mo's	0	27 yrs. 4 mo's
2.	Kermit Habben	9/1967	18 yrs. 3 mo's	2	16 yrs. 3 mo's
3.	Richard Seeger	4/1957	Left Japan 3/66-8yrs 10 mo's	2	6 yrs.10 mo's
4.	Norbert Meyer	2/1965	Left Japan 6/74-9yrs 3 mo's	2	7 yrs. 3 mo's
5.	Luther Weindorf	8/1960	Left Japan 3/66-5yrs 7 mo's	2	3 yrs. 7 mo's
6.	Harold Johne	8/1969	16 yrs. 4 mo's	2	14 yrs. 4 mo's
7.	Roger Falk	8/1974	11 yrs. 4 mo's	2	9 yrs. 4 mo's
8.	Herber Winterstein	8/1974	Left Japan 4/77-2yrs 7 mo's	2	0 yrs. 7 mo's
9.	David Haberkorn	3/1978	7 yrs. 9 mo's	2	5 yrs. 9 mo's
10.	Elwood Fromm	7/1978	7 yrs. 5 mo's	0	7 yrs. 5 mo's
11.	John Boehringer	11/1978	7 yrs. 1 mo	2	5 yrs. 1 mo
12.	James Behringer	1/1984	2 yrs.	2	0
13.	Glen Hieb	9/1986			

	National Pastors	Date Called	Years/Mo's to 1/86	Years/Mo's Active
1.	Yoshida	1/1970	16 yrs. 0 mo's	16 yrs. 0 mo's
2.	Suzuki	4/1971	Left Ministry 10/1972 - 1yr 6 mo's	1 yr. 6 mo's
3.	Makise	12/1969	Suspended 11/1971 - 1 yr 11 mo's	1 yr. 11 mo's
4.	Oshino	4/1971	14 yrs. 8 mo's	14 yrs. 8 mo's
5.	Nakamoto	3/1977	8 yrs. 9 mo's	8 yrs. 9 mo's
6.	Akagami	4/1981	4 yrs. 8 mo's	4 yrs. 8 mo's

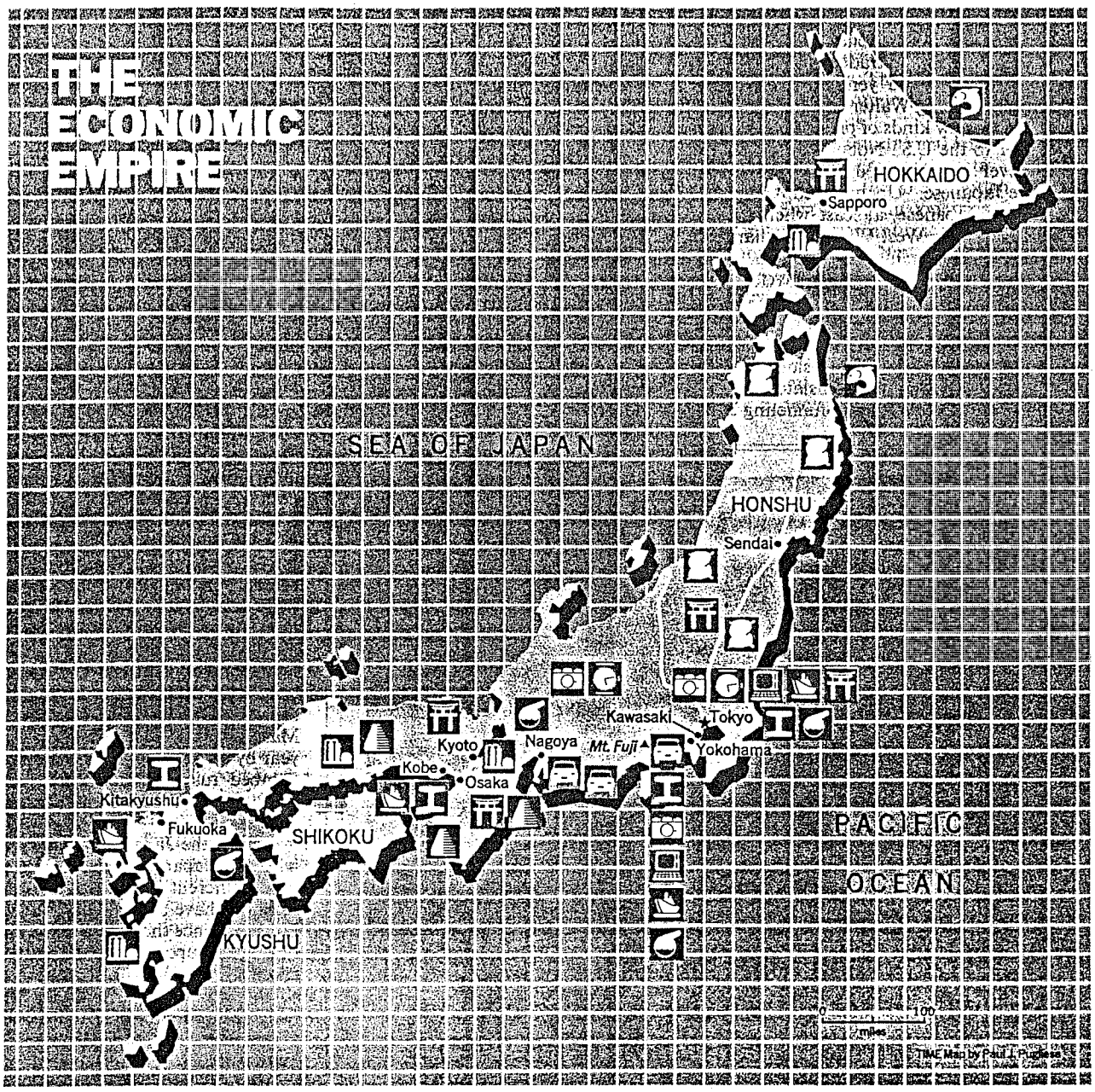
TEACHERS WHO SERVED NOZOMI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TSUCHIURA, JAPAN

	School Term	Name
1.	1971-72	Eric Hartzell
2.	1972-73	David Halldin
3.	1973-74	David Johnson
4.	1974-75	Ronald Schleef
5.	1975-76	Mark Adiskes
6.	1976-77	Dennis Lemke
7.	1977-78	Christine Tews
8.	1978-79	Christine Tews
9.	1979-80	Marla Krauss
10.	1980-81	Suzanne Tonder
11.	1981-82	Helene Grambow
12.	1982-83	Jane Zastrow
13.	1983-84	Deborah Bartsch
14.	1984-85	Carolyn Voss
15.	1985-86	Cheryl Tabbert
16.	1986-87	Deborah Drews


BOARD FOR WORLD MISSION
EXEC. COM. FOR JAPAN MISSION
MISSION COORDINATOR
ASS'T MISSION COORDINATOR
FIELD TREASURER
SEMINARY
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
SUNDAY SCHOOL INSTITUTE
SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
RADIO COMMITTEE
DOCTRINAL COMMITTEE
LITERATURE COMMITTEE
PUBLICITY
EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH
WELS JAPAN MISSION FIELD STAFF
* MEMBER OF LECC COMMITTEE
LECC - DCC SYNOD MEETING
RIJIKAI
ARCHIVIST
WELFARE SECRETARY
STATISTICIAN
LITURGY AND WORSHIP COMMITTEE
PASTOR SUPPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
COLLOQUY COMMITTEE
EVANGELISM COMMITTEE
DOCTRINAL COMMITTEE
SPIRITUAL GIFT AND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS COMMITTEE
LITERATURE COMMITTEE
RADIO COMMITTEE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
AUDIT COMMITTEE
LECC
APRIL 22 1986

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF JAPANESE POLITICS AND CULTURE

Period	Date	Event
NON-EARTHEN-WARE AGE (PRE-JOMON)	20,000 B.C.	Hunting and fishing with stone implements made by striking
JOMON PERIOD	8,000 B.C.	Hunting and fishing with stone implements made by grinding Straw-rope patterned earthenware used
YAYOI PERIOD	300 B.C.	Rice cultivation begins
	57 A.D.	King of the country of Na in Japan offers tribute to Later Han
	188(?)	Himiko becomes queen of country of Yamatai
KOFUN PERIOD	300	The Yamato Court unifies Japan
	391	Japanese army fights three Korean countries
ASUKA PERIOD	538	Buddhism introduced
	604	Constitution of 17 Articles
	607	Horyuji Temple constructed
	630	First envoys dispatched to T'ang
	645	Taika Reforms
NARA PERIOD	710	Nara established as capital
	712	*Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) compiled
	720	*Nihonshoki* (Chronicles of Japan) compiled
	741	Imperial edict for construction of *kokubun-ji* and *kokubun-niji* (state-established provincial temples and convents)
		Manyoshu compiled
HEIAN PERIOD	794	Kyoto-established as capital
	805	Saicho introduces Tendai sect
	806	Kukai introduces Shingon sect
	828	Kukai establishes Shugei-shuchi In (first public educational institution)
	857	Fujiwara power over Court increases
	905	*Kokin Waka-shu*, poetry anthology
	1000	*Makura no Soshi* ("The Pillow Book") written
	1011	*Genji Monogatari* ("Tales of Genji") completed
	1086	In (government by an ex-emperor) begins Samurai power increases
	1167	Taira no Kiyomori becomes Dajo-daijin (Prime Minister)
	1180 to 1185	Battles between the Minamoto and Taira
	1190	Taira destroyed Eisai propagates Rinzai sect of Zen
KAMAKURA PERIOD	1192	Minamoto no Yoritomo establishes Kamakura Shogunate
	1219	Minamoto no Sanetomo assassinated
	1224	Jodo-shin-shu sect spreads
	1227	Dogen introduces Soto sect of Zen
	1253	Nichiren preaches the Lotus Sutra
	1274	First Mongol invasion
	1281	Second Mongol invasion
	1331	Court splits into Northern and Southern Courts (*Nan-boku Cho* begins)
	1331 to 1333	War between Emperor Go-Daigo and Kamakura Shogunate Kamakura Shogunate destroyed
MUROMACHI PERIOD	1338	Ashikaga Takauji established Muromachi Shogunate
	1392	Unification of Northern and Southern Courts
	1406(?)	Zeami completes *Kaden-sho* ("Quintessance of Noh")
	1467 to 1477	Onin War ; The Age of Civil Wars begins Frequency of agrarian uprisings increase
	1543	Introduction of firearms from Portugal
	1549	Introduction of Christianity
	1573	Oda Nobunaga banishes Ashikaga shogun Ashikaga Shogunate destroyed
AZUCHI MOMOYAMA PERIOD	1573	Nobunaga assumes hegemony
	1582	Nobunaga assassinated Christian feudal lords send young envoys to Rome
	1585	Toyotomi Hideyoshi unifies country Tea ceremony becomes popular
	1587	Christianity prohibited
	1600	Battle of Sekigahara
EDO PERIOD	1603	Tokugawa Ieyasu establishes Tokugawa Shogunate in Edo Kabuki plays performed
	1614	Battle of Winter
	1615	Battle of Summer
	1637	Shimabara Rebellion
	1639	National isolation policy enacted
	1682	*Koshoku Ichidai Otoko* ("The Man who Spent his Life at Love Affairs")
	1693	*Narrow Road to the Deep North* written by Basho
	1702	47 loyal *ronin* avenge their lord's death
	1703	*Ningyo-joruri* (bunraku) by Chikamatsu Monzae-mon performed
	1853	Commodore Perry lands in Japan
	1854	Japan concludes amity treaties with America, Britain and Russia
	1855	Japan concludes amity treaties with France and Holland
	1867	Tokugawa Shogunate destroyed
MEIJI PERIOD	1868	Meiji Restoration



The four major islands of Japan, plus 3,918 smaller islands, comprise 145,808 sq. mi., about the size of Montana. Slightly more than 70% of the land is mountainous, 67% is forested, 15% devoted to agriculture, and only 18% is usable as living space for the population of 119 million. Other noteworthy statistics: population of metropolitan Tokyo: 11,736,214. G.N.P.: $1.1 trillion. Voting age: 20. Telephones: 44 per 100 people. Cars: 195 per 1,000 people. Unemployment rate: 2.5%. Inflation rate: 2.1%.

- CAMERAS
- CHEMICALS
- COMPUTERS
- FISHERIES
- IRON AND STEEL
- OIL REFINERIES
- BULLET TRAIN
- RICE
- SHIPBUILDING
- TEXTILES
- TOURIST ATTRACTIONS
- VEHICLES
- WATCHES

What Religion? Well, I. . . .

By Raymond Hammer

Ask a Japanese what his religion is and he may well reply: "I expect I'm a Buddhist, but perhaps I'm Shinto! Well, really, I'm nothing in particular!"

Until 1968, the whole population had to be registered with a Buddhist temple. This means that family links with Buddhism are still strong, and memorials for the departed, which bring out family loyalties, are all associated with Buddhism. On the other hand, our respondent may well have had his marriage conducted at some prestigious Shinto shrine and, although despising the somewhat frenzied character of a shrine procession, probably subscribes to the local Shinto festival out of solidarity with the community.

The overlap is well indicated by religious statistics which list 150 million adherents of the different religions, when the population is only 110 million. The final remark of our respondent is in line with religious surveys which indicate that half the population is indifferent to religion, whilst a fifth would deny any religious affiliation.

It is likely that of those who are "religiously inclined" 65 percent would reckon themselves Buddhist while the majority of the rest would belong to so-called new religions which largely reflect the fusion of Shinto and Buddhist ideas which has marked popular religion since the ninth century. At the same time, the importance they give to charismatic leaders ties in with the shamanistic past of both Shinto and lay Buddhism.

Despite the lack of explicit religion, implicit religious notions influence the majority of Japanese.

Shinto is not a native Japanese word, but was coined in the sixth century when Buddhism entered the country. It described the indigenous faith—the Way of the Kami. The word "kami" is often translated as "god" or "gods," but should probably be left untranslated, for the religion cannot be described as either monotheistic or polytheistic. When Japanese speak of "Yaoyorozu no Kami" (eight million kami), they are affirming not a multiplicity of deities, but the omnipresence of the divine.

Originally, Shinto rites were very simple and no special buildings were required. A tree, a mountain, a grove, a stream could all be the focal point of the numinous.

The divine word came through a shaman in a state of kami-possession, in an ecstatic dance. The modern kagura (a mystic dance) performed by the miko (female shrine attendants) is a lineal descendant of primitive practice.

Purification rites are important, for the chief Shinto virtue is makoto (sincerity). It is significant that, with a total absence of images, a mirror is the commonest symbol of the kami.

Originally each clan would have its own particular kami, regarded as the ancestor of the clan. So the Imperial family was seen as descended from the sun goddess whose shrine is at Ise. Until 1945, the Emperor was seen as an ikigami (a living kami), but so were many other leaders of Shinto sects which originated in the 18th and 19th centuries. After all, each Shinto worshiper expected to become a kami at death. Hence the respect for ancestors, now seen as belonging to the supernatural order.

Japanese Buddhism belongs to the Mahayana stream and manifests both traits of Chinese religions and an accommodation to Shinto. While there are many older sects, the majority of present-day Buddhists belong to movements that became popular in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Pure Land Buddhism stresses the part played by Amitabha (Amida in Japanese), the Bodhisattva who enables the worshiper to reach his goal. To attain Buddhahood, help from outside (tariki) avails, where jiriki (self-effort) fails. Shinran (1173-1262) held that all that is needed is faith in Amida. He rejected all the older ascetic practices and, like Luther, accepted a married priesthood.

Zen Buddhism, as the name implies (it is derived from the Sanskrit word for "meditation"), emphasizes the place of meditation as the path to enlightenment. While accepting many of the Buddhist sutras, the enlightenment experience is not dependent on them. Neither sense-perception nor logic are the way; the intuitive leap into enlightenment is the true path. There are cultural aspects of Zen such as the tea ceremony and flower arrangement.

Nichiren Buddhism takes many forms, most of which are somewhat antagonistic to the other Buddhist sects. It is named after Nichiren (1222-1282) who regarded the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha's last word and testament. His mandala is seen as a symbolic representation of reality and is an object of devotion, while the cry "Namu myoho rengekyo" "All hail to the glorious Lotus Sutra" is the chant of his followers. One vigorous group with lay leadership claims over 25 million members and has entered politics.

* * *

Dr. Raymond Hammer is the author of Japan's Religious Ferment, SCM Press 1961, and a contributor to the section on Japanese religions in Man And His Gods, Hamlyn Press 1971. He is secretary of the Archbishops' Interfaith Consultants, and was a professor in Tokyo 14 years.

Reuter Photo

A BUDDHIST PRIEST blesses some 70,000 used brassieres, heaped in a big pyramid, in a memorial service for cast-off underwear at the compound of Zojoji Temple in Tokyo Friday. An underwear maker collected some 200,000 used brassieres as a publicity stunt on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. The brassieres will be buried.

The Japan Times, 6/8/86

E-10-

THE WALL STRE

VOL. LXVII NO. 187 ★ ★ ★ MIDWEST EDITION WEDNESDAY, JULY

Barren Ground

Christian Missionaries Sow the Seed in Japan But Find Little Grows

Midwest Couple Takes Years To Build a Tiny Parish In Shadow of a Temple

Mormons Run Afoul of Tea

By BERNARD WYSOCKI JR.
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NAGASAKI, Japan — Liam O'Doherty sounds like many American expatriates in Japan. He has been living and working here for six years, but his product isn't selling very well.

"It's mostly a marketing problem," says the 37-year-old Philadelphia native. "The image of the product is of something very strict."

Liam O'Doherty isn't a businessman. He is a missionary, a Roman Catholic priest of the Augustinian order. His "product" is Christianity itself, and he and his two Augustinian colleagues aren't finding very many Japanese takers.

"We have 10 to 15 adult baptisms a year," he says. "Over in South Korea, in a similar operation, they have 40 to 60 a month."

The priest has learned what many have discovered before him, that Japan is the Mount Everest of missionary work. It has one of the world's largest concentrations of foreign missionaries, nearly 5,200, yet remains one of the least Christian countries outside of the Middle East. Less than 1% of the population is Christian, and despite all the missionary work, the percentage is dropping.

Ecumenical Rejection

For more than four centuries, Japan has resisted the efforts of nearly every major evangelical group. It has thwarted Anglicans and Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Russian Orthodox, Mormons, Mennonites, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Southern Baptists, Bahais.

In recent years, many missionary organizations here have started to scale back their efforts. Some American churches are cutting financial support to missionaries in prosperous Japan, preferring to put their energy and money into the Third World. The missionaries who poured in after World War II are beginning to retire, and fewer young people in the West are willing to replace them.

To some veterans of the struggle, the only realistic response is pessimism. "There is no way that Christianity will ever really take root in Japan," says Alden E. Matthews, who has put in 33 years of Japanese missionary work for the United Church of Christ. Campion Lally, a Franciscan priest working here since the 1950s, believes that "the day of the foreign missionary in Japan is finished."

Competing Values

Why is Japan such a tough sell? For starters, there is the residue of history. Early Christian missionaries, after a few decades of strong success in the mid-1500s, were seen as a threat to the shogun and subjected to expulsion, torture or execution. Christianity went underground—clusters of "hidden Christians" still inhabit some small islands—and missionaries weren't accepted back until the 19th century. What lingers today is a mild stigma against Western religions.

In addition, experts say, foreign things tend to succeed in Japan only when they have been "Japanized," while Christianity comes to Japan undiluted, unbending and strict. Japanese corporate culture also may have something to do with it; Japanese sociologists say many Japanese are so devoted to their companies they have little time for new pursuits. And certainly one of the obstacles facing Western religion here is Eastern religion.

At the city of Nagano in central Japan, for instance, the Buddhist temple of Zenkoji has been the heart and soul of the community for more than 1,300 years. People are drawn to Zenkoji "as if drawn by a bull," the Japanese say. It certainly seems that way to Bruce and Delna Helland. After 25 years of proselytizing on the streets, conducting Bible class in both English and Japanese and holding Sunday services in rented rooms, they are able to convert only two or three people a year.

Planting the Seed

Mr. Helland, a quiet man with an unruly shock of hair, is a Michigan native who became deeply religious in the Navy back in the 1950s. Delna was an equally devout Mennonite from Wisconsin. Together they joined the Tokyo-based Evangelical Alliance Mission, studied Japanese, moved to Nagano and took on perhaps the toughest kind of missionary work, "church planting." A church planter struggles to develop converts, a local pastor and seed money and put them all together in a parish. If he succeeds, he starts all over again somewhere else.

The Hellands knew it would be hard, but they hadn't anticipated the depth of the loneliness and stress of trying to build from scratch in a remote Japanese city. "When we first came we couldn't sleep at night, so we recited Bible verses to each other," recalls Mrs. Helland, a tall, gray-haired woman who would seem right at home dishing out pie at a church picnic back in the Midwest. "To comfort ourselves, we'd recall what the Bible says: 'As you sow, so you shall reap.' " Yet after two years, the only convert seemed to be a local pigeon.

Persistence finally paid off. In 1973, after nearly 10 years of effort in one district of Nagano, the Hellands had a congregation of 30 and a Japanese pastor Mr. Hel-

Please Turn to Page 16, Column 1

E-11

Barren Ground: Western Missionaries Sow the Seeds Of Christianity in Japan but Find That Few Sprout

Continued From First Page

land had helped train. The members built a small church, mostly with their own money and labor. The Hellands kicked in $6,000 of their savings. Then, almost immediately, they began the whole process again in a different section of Nagano.

After 10 more years, they had only 12 church members and no pastor. "Sometimes we'd show up on Sunday and there wouldn't be anybody, or just one or two," recalls Mr. Helland sorrowfully. "We just had to quit."

But they have begun a third church planting, in downtown Nagano City, and have 16 parishioners so far. Most are women and several are handicapped, as is the case in many Christian congregations in Japan. Headquarters is a rented room above a restaurant, with tables and chairs, a lectern and a portable organ. The Hellands have collected $750,000 toward a church, most of it from parishes and individuals back in the U.S. But because land prices have soared—to over $2,000 for a parcel six feet by six feet—they need even more before they can build. And they can't find a pastor.

At the rented room on a recent Sunday morning, Mr. Helland preached to the 10 parishioners who showed up and led them in hymns, all in Japanese. Afterward, everybody ate lunch together—from the nearby McDonald's.

One of the parishioners is a man of about 40 who works in the post office. He began reading the Bible 18 years ago after being in a near-fatal car accident. After several years of Bible lessons and English classes, he joined the Hellands' congregation and was baptized. But he doesn't tell his co-workers, he says, because Christianity is considered odd in conformist Japan and would make them uncomfortable. "If my work mates knew, I wouldn't be able to go out drinking with them anymore," he says.

A missionary, in competing with Buddhism and Japanese Shintoism, isn't so much up against their religious as their cultural grip on the Japanese. Buddhist tradition, for instance, obliges an eldest son to look after his ancestors by maintaining a Buddhist altar, a custom many Christian denominations find unacceptable. Generally speaking, the missionaries face a culture gap that is hard to bridge.

Satoshi Ogino, a retired Tokyo banker and a Buddhist, says he has long had an interest in Christianity but finds the missionaries who knock on his door "intrusive, a lot like door-to-door insurance people." And he adds, "The people look haunted. They aren't soft like Buddhists. These people should be more relaxed and more human."

The cultural gulf is especially wide for the Mormons. Problems begin the minute that they get invited inside a home. Invariably, they are offered tea—simple courtesy in Japan. But Mormons are not permitted to drink tea, and they decline. The Japanese consider this strange, if not rude. Mormonism also forbids drinking and smoking, both very popular in Japan.

But the Mormons are among the most systematic and aggressive missionaries here, numbering more than 1,200. Many are college-age Americans who spend two years in Japan, living dormitory-style and proselytizing in pairs.

Their routine is a study in ascetic living. Six days a week they rise at 6:30, study religion and Japanese language till 10:30, then work the streets till sometimes as late as 9:30. Typically, they accost passersby with offers of free English conversation, which they soon turn to Mormonism. In a month, says 20-year-old Tokyo missionary Kent Hartshorn, he is expected to make 380 "contacts," conduct 20 one-on-one "teaching sessions" and bring several people to the three-hour Sunday service.

For all the effort, the results can be discouraging. Mr. Hartshorn, a star performer, has converted only seven Japanese to Mormonism during 14 months in Japan. His partner, Brian Kimball, has converted five.

Lamont Moon, a Utah rancher serving a three-year stint here overseeing 140 young missionaries, envies his counterparts elsewhere. "In the Philippines there are missions that get 1,000 baptisms a month," he says, looking over a tally sheet. "A lot of your South American missions are getting around 300." But the combined efforts of his 140 volunteers usually yield only 25 or 30 a month.

One of the biggest surprises for young Mormon missionaries is that the man o the house rarely is home, even at 9:30 on a weeknight. Japanese tend to put in long hours on the job, and after-work drinking with co-workers is very popular. Many Japanese men are home during the daytime only on Sunday and would be too tired to go to church.

Students, another target, also are elusive. "Almost from the day they hit middle school (seventh grade), school becomes everything, what with after-school cram classes and clubs," says Michael Stanley an Augustinian colleague of Father O'Doherty's in Nagasaki.

Actually, Nagasaki is about 5% Christian, far more so than most Japanese cities. One of the first missionaries in Japan a Portuguese priest named Gaspar Vilela came to the city in 1568 and was so successful he turned a Buddhist temple into church. Yet Nagasaki today has just handful of European and American missionaries, including the three Augustinia priests. They have begun to urge the faithful to become missionaries themselves, but without success.

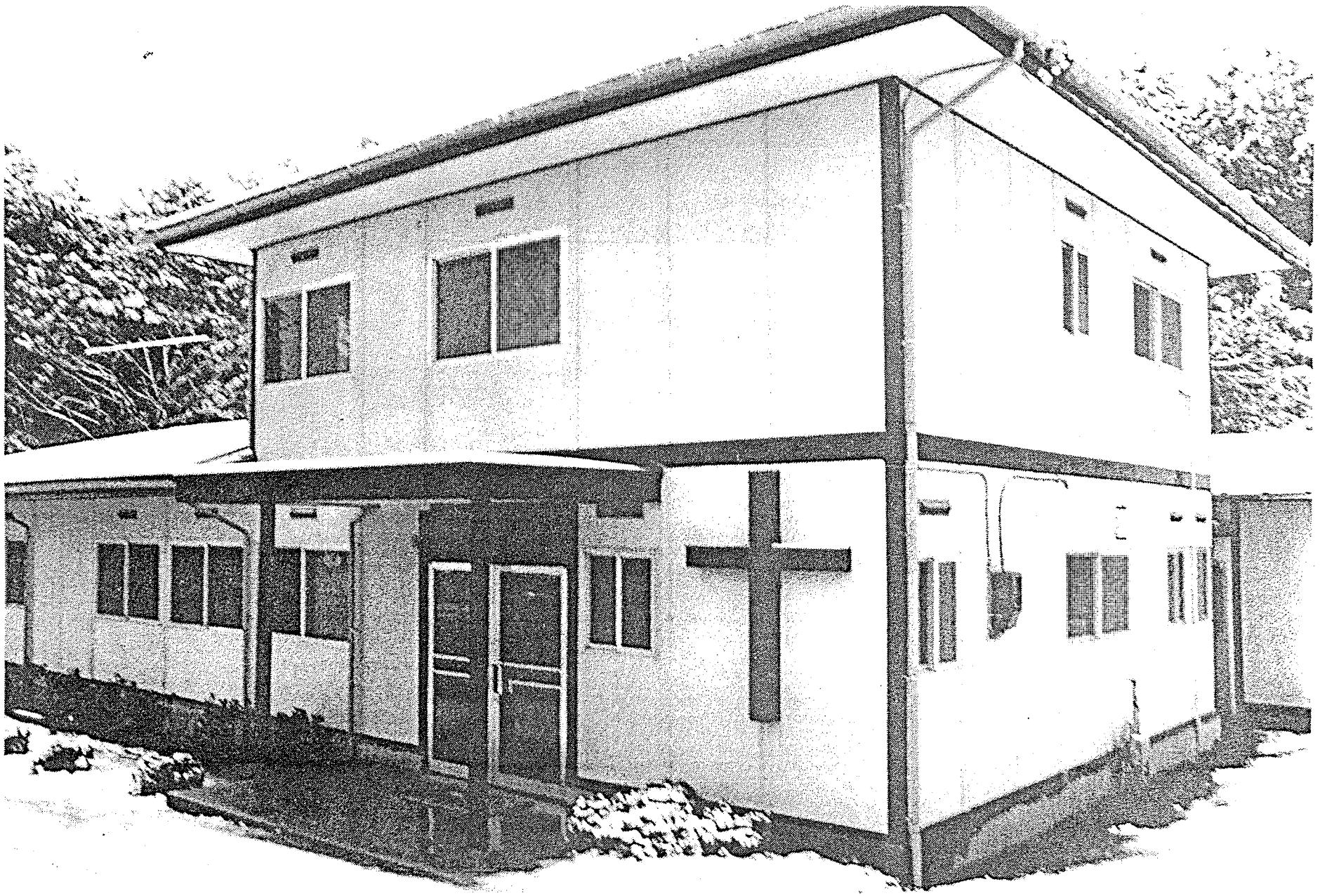
Though any Western missionary to Japan knows things will be tough, sometime he doesn't realize just how tough. Father O'Doherty spent two years in Tokyo studying the Japanese language before he came to Nagasaki. During that time he had a recurring nightmare of walking in Tokyo crowded Ginza district and suddenly hearing laughter—the derision of a crowd Japanese who were telling him, "Ha-h everybody in Japan knew how to speak English all along."

But when he got to Nagasaki, the re nightmare came. His first day in town, Father O'Doherty tried to strike up a conversation on the street, figuring he would p his two years of arduous language trainin to immediate use.

He began chatting with a stranger. Th stranger started talking to him. But n body had told Father O'Doherty that people in Nagasaki speak a special dialect. I couldn't understand a word.

"SPEAK, LORD;
THY SERVANT HEARETH."

Delegate Church Council - Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church



Seminary - Hope Chapel - Library at Tsuchiura

Pastor D. Haberkorn instructing two adults

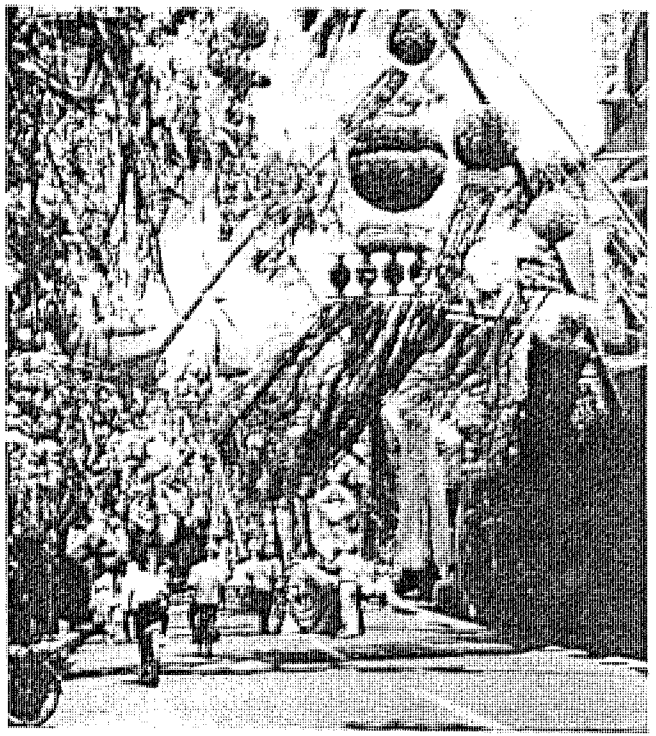
Baptism of M. Nomoto by Evangelist k. Takahashi — Ministering to the blind

Print Shop - Printer H. Najihara

The great Buddha at Kamakura

On New Years millions visit the Shrines and Temples

"that they might know Thee!"



Buddha and Shinto Festivals

Prayers tied to trees at temples and shrines